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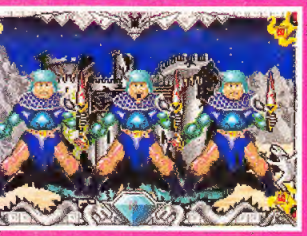

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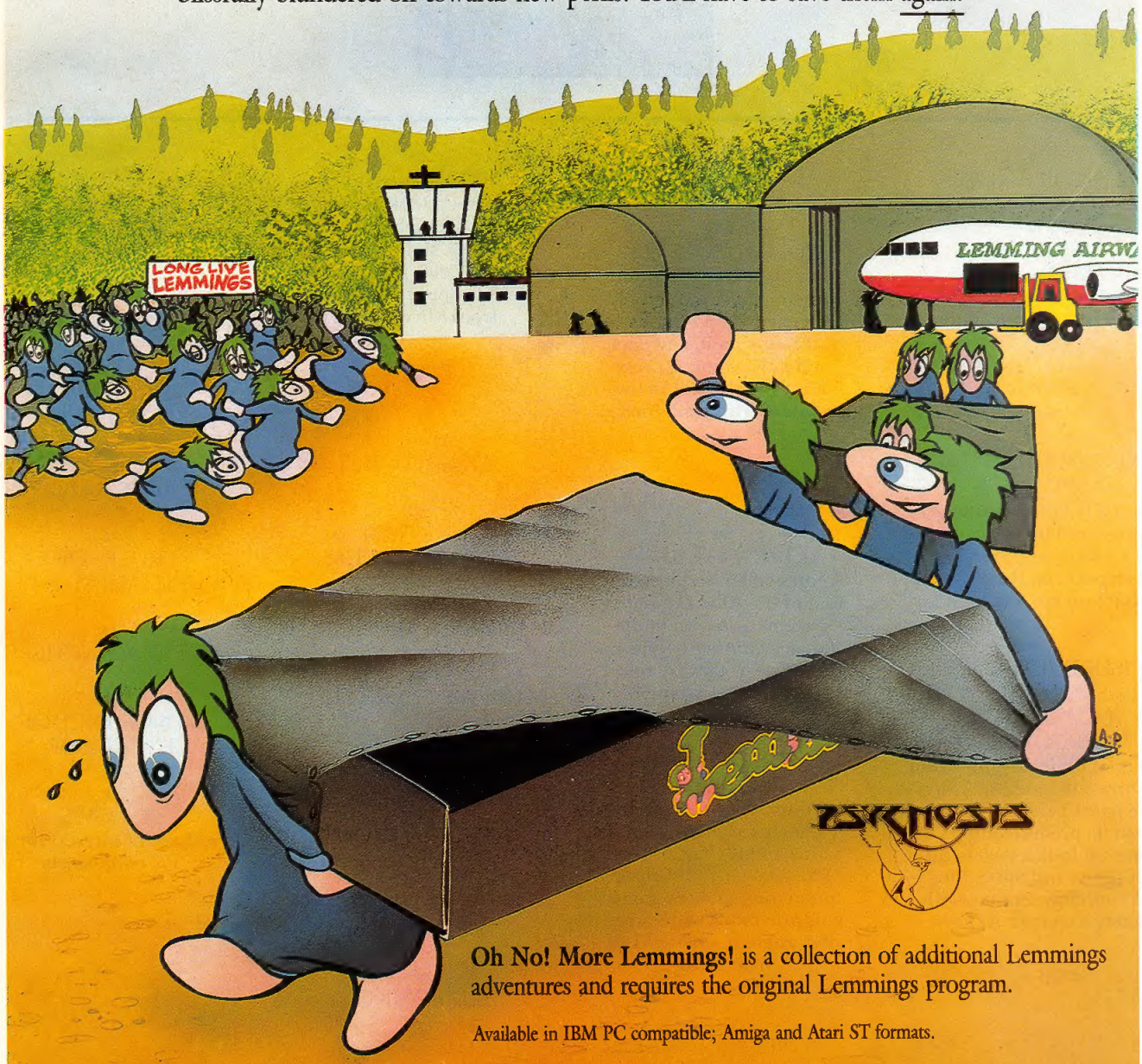

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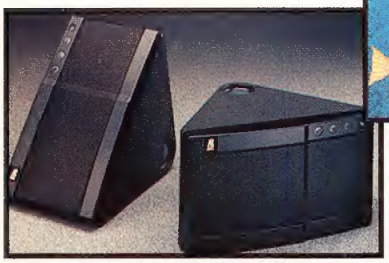
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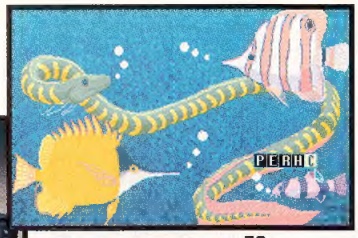
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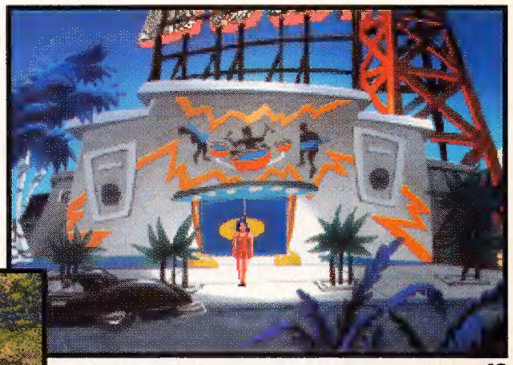
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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1992

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MPA

EDITOR'S NOTES

If you hadn't noticed, we're ringing in the new year with a new name: *Game Players PC Strategy Guide* is now *Game Players PC Entertainment*. In light of our expanding coverage, we believe that our new title more accurately describes what this magazine is and what it's becoming.

Over the past year, we've increased the number of games covered, and we've broadened our editorial scope by addressing topics such as entertainment software with educational value, how to optimize your PC for today's memory-hungry games, how to get started with MIDI, what to look for in a sound board, and more. We plan to continue covering the broad spectrum of topics that apply to PC game players in the 90s — and we're excited by the possibilities. We have lots of new ideas on the table, many of which we'll be translating into informative, enlightening articles in the months ahead.

While we're exhilarated by these changes, we remain steadfastly committed to bringing you the kind of coverage that has made this magazine successful. Our main focus will continue to be on close-up, critical, and comprehensive looks at all the categories of entertainment software — military and sports simulations, role-playing games, graphic adventures, and so on.

Next issue, we'll be announcing the winners of our annual PC Game Awards. Once every year, the Game Players staff chooses the best title in each game category and presents trophies to the winning publishers. It's never an easy job deciding which games are best, but it's always a lot of fun for us and something we look forward to.

We have big plans for '92, and we're more committed than ever to delivering the best coverage around for PC gamers. So stay tuned — you don't want to miss any upcoming issues of *PC Entertainment*.

Lance Elko
Editorial Director

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AMARILLO SLIM DEALER'S CHOICE

Have you ever seen a TV show or movie in which an unscrupulous card shark teaches an innocent bumpkin how to play poker, only to be cleaned out by the novice? It may be satisfying to see the "bad" guy get his just deserts on a TV show, but in real life the chances are that the greenhorn would walk away penniless. That's because there's no substitute for experience when it comes to winning at poker.

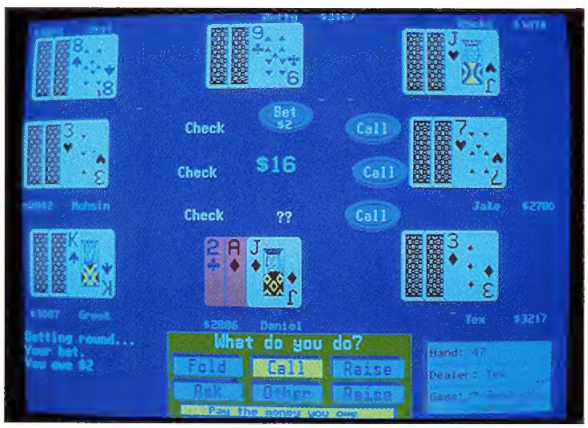
Now the folks at **Villa Crespo** have come up with a package that can help you sharpen your game without losing your shirt. *Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice* features seven different styles of poker; in addition to the relatively popular draw poker and 5- and 7-card stud, there's the lesser known hold-em, forty-four, and 6-card stud. With four variations for each game, there's a total of 28 different kinds of poker to master.

An on-line help system is available to teach you each game, and there are plenty of options to tailor each game to fit your personal tastes. You control every aspect of the game, from antes and maximum bets to the strength of computer-controlled opponents. There's even a tutor to give you advice at any time during each hand.

The graphics aren't stunning — the card faces are the only artwork in the game — and the sound board support is only used to audibilize player's choices. But *Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice* is surprisingly addictive. Each player has a distinctive style, and before long you can find yourself in an intensely personal betting duel with the likes of "Vegas J." or "Annie."

There are a few quirks, however, that detract from the enjoyment. For one thing, you can't make a bet between the minimum and maximum wagers, an oversight we found surprising. But most annoying is the save-game feature: when a game is saved, you're kicked back to DOS (and the game's copy protection ritual). In fact, you must reload the program just to begin a new game with a fresh stake and different opponents.

—S.P.



HOME ALONE

Based on last year's box office smash, this arcade-strategy game comes up a little short in several key areas. While the graphics are decent enough, and the digitized scenes of characters from the movie add a nice flavor, more time should have been invested in making the game play more engaging.

The premise of this **Capstone** title is the same as that of the movie. Kevin is alone in his parents' house and knows that the burglars will be making their forced entry at 9:00. When play begins, the game clock shows 8:00 and starts running immediately. You, as Kevin, use household objects to make traps, creating as many pitfalls and snares as possible in an hour (only several minutes of real time). When the burglars enter at 9:00, you must lure them to the traps, taking care not to become a victim of your own handiwork. You can also slow down the prowlers by peppering them with shots from your BB gun.

By virtue of its title, *Home Alone* will naturally appeal to kids or younger players. With that in mind, we think the game is too difficult and potentially frustrating. There's too much experimenting needed before you achieve any success. The game is not particularly intuitive — you'll spend too much time figuring out what you should do and when. By the time you do, you might well be bored.

Also, once you've played ten or so games — which you can do in maybe an hour — and know all the locations of objects you'll use as traps, there's not much that makes you want to come back and play again. Those who do succeed in thwarting the robbers will have to think of a good reason to load up this game again.

Fans of the movie will likely enjoy taking on the role of young Kevin, but in our opinion, most of them will disappointed after only a few games.

—L.E.

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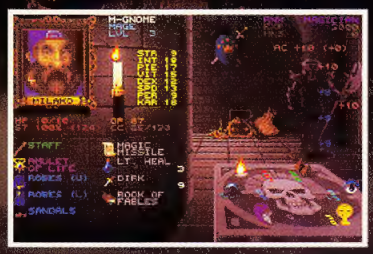

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THE IMMORTAL

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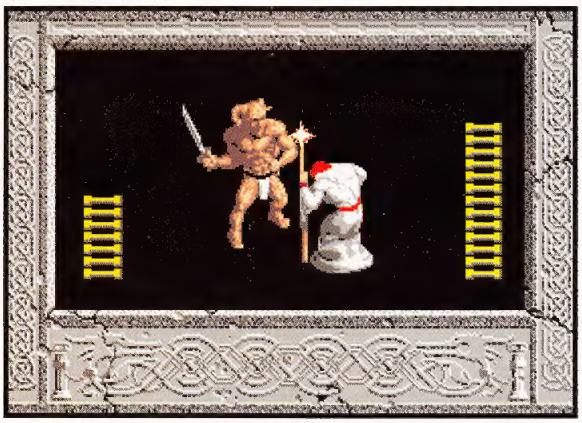

The Immortal unfolds for the most part in real time as you wander the Labyrinth, searching for clues to the whereabouts of your lost teacher. The angled 3-D perspective takes a little getting used to, but it gives the game a look like no other. During the arcade-style combat sequences, the game switches to a wonderful close-up view, where you actually have to fight each monster hand-to-hand.

The Labyrinth is eight levels deep, and the biggest challenge in each stage is just figuring out how to get to the next level. There's a lot more going on in this game than first appears, and bad choices made early on can easily come back to haunt you.

The Immortal is also available for videogame systems, and if you're familiar with those versions you should know that the PC adaptation has its strengths and weaknesses. It's by far the best animated, and the graphics are adequate (if not outstanding), but it lacks the spectacularly gory deaths that punctuated the Sega Genesis version. The action is a little hard to control with a PC joystick, although the fight scenes are surprisingly easy.

Overall, though, it's still the same game: an interesting combination of action, strategy, and puzzle solving that's sure to challenge almost any player.

—*J.L.*

THE SECRET CODES OF C.Y.P.H.E.R: OPERATION WILDLIFE

This educational title, the first from newcomer **Tanager Software**, is a hybrid game of strategy, puzzles, and deduction. The game's strength lies in what it teaches — more than 1400 facts about 87 different mammals. The weakness is in how it gets there.

The storyline, with a decided nod to the *Carmen Sandiego* series, puts you in the role of secret agent for C.Y.P.H.E.R., an organization whose purpose is to provide clients with a confidential message-delivery system.

The game's various subplots — and there are many — are seemingly unrelated. You start by selecting a client whose case has no connection to the world of mammals. Answer some mammal questions correctly and fellow agents will deliver coded messages that you can choose to receive and decode in English, sign language, semaphore, or Morse code. Decode ten messages and your client's case is solved. During the process, you'll encounter enemy agents, but their presence throughout play is, in effect, gratuitous.

While it's clear how all the game components interrelate after you've played a few times, it's not clear *why* they relate. The result is a game with a contrived and somewhat dense premise. Nontheless, we enjoyed the game and learned a great deal about the animal

kingdom after we choose to ignore the overall purpose of the storyline.

C.Y.P.H.E.R. is in many ways a noble first effort for Tanager — there's lots of good information packed into the game, the skill levels are well defined, and the graphics work is quite good. In future releases, we'd prefer a simpler, more rational game story platform that does a better job of cutting to the chase.

—*L.E.*

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BIG SOUNDS

If you've already added a sound board to your computer, a good pair of speakers can make a big difference in sound quality

Everyone knows that dazzling graphics can enhance the experience of playing a computer game. The latest 256-color games are selling a lot of VGA video cards and monitors. But in the hierarchy of human senses, hearing ranks second only to seeing. So good sound makes a difference, too.

That's why plug-in sound boards such as the Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, and Roland LAPC-I are rapidly becoming more popular. We covered these boards (and others) in our last issue.

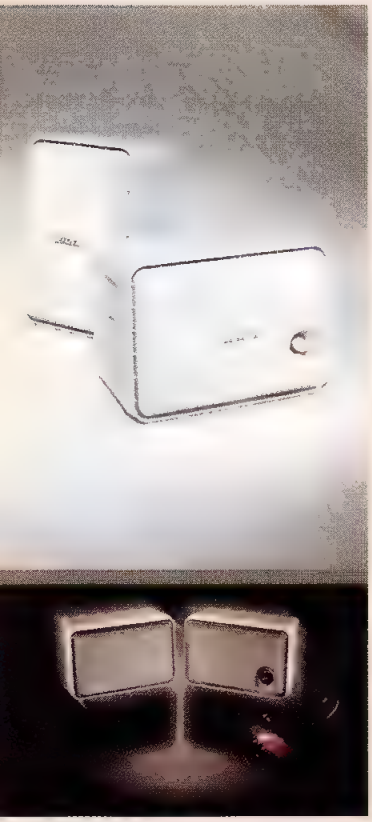
Except for the Covox Sound Master II (which includes a pair of external speakers) and the Disney Sound Source (an outboard device with a built-in speaker), sound boards can't do the job alone, however. To really take advantage of what a sound board has to offer, you need to plug it into a stereo amplifier and a pair of high-fidelity loudspeakers. The results can be nothing short of breathtaking. You'll hear, maybe even feel, the *whoosh* of a flight simulator's jet engine; the staccato drum-roll of a war game's machine guns; the harsh *crack* of a fastball meeting a wooden bat; and, of course, the lush musical soundtracks that accompany many of today's computer games.

One way to achieve this dramatic improvement in sound quality is to simply plug your computer into your home stereo system. All you have to do is run shielded phono cables from the sound board's headphone jack or audio outputs to the auxiliary input jacks of your stereo receiver or amplifier. Pretty soon you'll be shaking the walls with the thunder of your 12-inch woofers.

SMA

Tom R. Halfhill

SPEAKERS



If you don't have a stereo system — or if it's in a different room from your computer — you'll have to consider some alternatives. Maybe you have a boom box with auxiliary inputs. Some stereo TV sets let you plug in an external sound source, too.

If those alternatives are unworkable, you may be in the market for a pair of speakers devoted exclusively to your computer. Buying speakers for a computer so you can play games may seem wacky, but rest assured that it's not. In fact, giant companies such as Microsoft, IBM, and Tandy are currently pushing a buzzword called *multimedia*, and high-quality sound is a vital cornerstone of the concept. (If anyone questions your motives, hint that you're upgrading your system for future multimedia applications. Before long, they'll be asking *you* for advice.)

Buying speakers for a computer is a little easier than buying speakers for a home or car stereo system. To begin with, there aren't as many speakers to choose from. For the best results, you need speakers which are *self-amplified* or *self-powered*. Ordinary speakers, such as the ones connected to most home stereos, are powered by a separate receiver or amplifier. The speakers themselves are *passive* devices which have no amplification of their own. Computer sound boards lack the power to drive all but the smallest passive speakers. In fact, some manufacturers (such as Ad Lib) warn that your sound board may be damaged if you attempt to drive passive speakers without amplification.

That means you must either buy an amplifier to go along with a pair of passive speakers, or take a shortcut and get self-amplified speakers. Amplified speakers (also called *active* speakers) contain their own small audio amplifier and power source. Some amplified speakers are designed to be portable and therefore run on batteries, possibly with the option of adding adapters so you can plug them into a wall socket or a car's cigarette lighter. Others (the more powerful ones) require wall current. Some models have their own controls for volume, balance, and tone, and some are shielded to prevent them from interfering with TVs and video monitors — an important consideration if you're placing powerful speakers near your computer.

Despite their minor differences, all amplified speakers of this type have one thing in common: they're small. In fact, some of them look *ridiculously* small, especially if you're accustomed to measuring high fidelity by the size and number of woofers and tweeters.

But thanks to the miracles of modern technology, today's small speakers can pump out remarkably big sound. Some of the better models use space-age materials for the speaker cones, oversized magnetic coils, and computer-designed enclosures. Theoretically, no loudspeaker can accurately reproduce the sound of an instrument whose sound hole is larger than the diameter of the speaker cone. But gone are the days when small speakers were conspicuous for their tinny, distorted sound reproduction.

Now there's a wide selection of respectable amplified speakers, and the selection is growing all the time. Prices range from under $30 a pair to $400 and up. And as with most consumer items, higher prices generally mean higher quality.

To give you enough choices to fit your budget, we've compiled a list of amplified speakers suitable for use with computers. Although this isn't a complete list of every speaker available, it covers the range from quite inexpensive to moderately expensive. We've been testing some of these speakers ourselves for quite a while, and our comments are noted. As always when buying speakers, try to audition them before you buy.

...thanks to the miracles of modern technology, today's small speakers can pump out remarkably big sound.

Acoustic Research Powered Partner 420

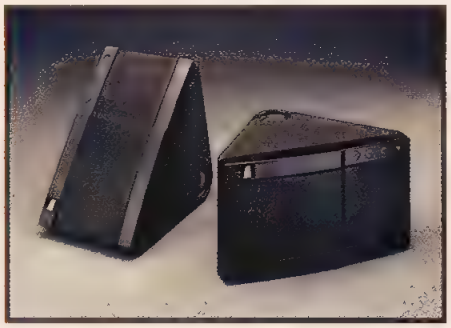
Acoustic Research, a respected name in high-fidelity audio, makes three amplified speaker systems under the Powered Partner label. The 420, though the least powerful, still packs more punch than many similar speakers: 10 watts per channel with a frequency response of 60 to 20,000 hertz. The speakers require either 110-volt AC wall current or 12-volt DC (car battery). Each enclosure contains a four-inch polypropylene woofer and a two-inch liquid-cooled tweeter. The enclosures are shielded to prevent them from interfering with video screens. The 420 lacks any volume or tone knobs, so be sure your sound board has a volume control. List price: $275/pair.

Acoustic Research Powered Partner 850

Though cosmetically similar to the AR Powered Partner 420, the 850 offers more power plus built-in volume and balance controls. It delivers 25 watts per channel with a frequency response of 50 to 20,000 hertz and runs on AC wall current only. Each enclosure contains an eight-inch polypropylene woofer and a one-inch liquid-cooled tweeter. Although the 850s are unshielded and shouldn't be placed next to your monitor, they happen to be the personal favorites of Henri Chalifour, a musical development technician at Ad Lib. "You get nice definition of all the frequencies," he says. "Everyone is impressed with the power they provide." List price: $475/pair.

Acoustic Research Powered Partner 570

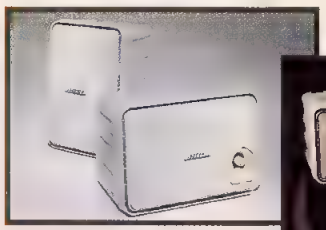
The 570 is the most powerful in AR's Powered Partner line, delivering 40 watts per channel at 40 to 20,000 hertz. It runs on AC wall current or 12-volt DC. Each shielded enclosure has a five-inch polypropylene woofer, a one-inch liquid-cooled tweeter, and separate controls for volume, bass, and treble. One of our editors owns a pair of 570s at home and praises their sound quality. His only criticism: Each speaker has its own volume control instead of separate controls for volume and balance, so it's hard to adjust the volume without throwing the balance out of kilter. But this is true of all amplified speaker systems with separate volume controls. List price: $475/pair.



Acoustic Research Powered Partner 570

Bose RoomMate Computer Monitor

Bose, another famous name in high-fidelity audio, makes three models of amplified speakers suitable for use with PCs. In fact, the RoomMate Computer Monitor is specifically designed for this purpose. It features a built-in volume control, magnetically shielded enclosures, and special distortion-limiting circuitry. Each heavy speaker box contains a single 4.5-inch driver, and the system requires 110-volt AC wall current. The RoomMate Computer Monitor is virtually identical to the Bose Video RoomMate. We've been testing two pairs of Video RoomMates for several months, and they're currently the office favorites. They boast a full, rich sound, with amazingly strong bass and very crisp highs. The RoomMate Computer Monitor and Video RoomMate both carry a list price of $339/pair.



Bose RoomMate Computer Monitor

Bose Video RoomMate

Bose RoomMate II

The RoomMate II is almost identical to the RoomMate Computer Monitor and Video RoomMate but is more portable. In addition to running off standard wall current, the RoomMate II can be plugged into the cigarette lighter of a car or boat, or powered for up to 12 hours by a special rechargeable battery pack. List price (not including battery pack or 12-volt adapter): $339/pair.

Bose RoomMate II with optional battery pack and case

Realistic Minimus-0.6

Manufactured and sold by Radio Shack, these small battery-powered speakers deliver a maximum two watts per channel. Each unshielded plastic enclosure contains a 2.5-inch driver. There are no volume or tone controls. List price: $49.95/pair.

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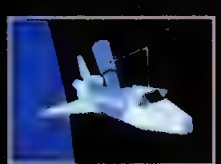
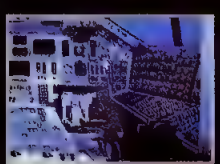

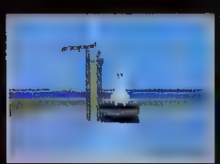

Realistic Minimus-0.4

This system offers four-inch drivers with separate bass and treble controls. Audio output is 1.5 watts per channel. The unshielded plastic enclosures snap together for portability and have a carrying strap. They're battery powered, but 110-volt AC and 12-volt DC adapters are available. We've tested both these speakers and the more expensive Realistic Minimus-0.6 models, and despite the slightly lower power output, we think these sound better. They also require only half as many "C" batteries (four instead of eight). List price: $29.95/pair.

Realistic Minimus-0.4

Realistic 40-1303

These unusual-looking speakers come with their own tote bag that has room for a Sony Walkman-style personal stereo. Each tripod-mounted speaker contains a three-inch woofer, a piezo tweeter, and delivers three watts per channel. They run on battery power, but 110-volt AC and 12-volt DC adapters are available. List price: $49.95/pair.

Sony SRS-200

This is Sony's most powerful set of compact amplified speakers. The SRS-200 is rated at 27.5 watts per channel with a frequency response of 45 to 20,000 hertz. To pump up the bass, there's a special circuit known as Dynamic Bass Boost (DBB), similar to those found in many boom boxes. The enclosures are magnetically shielded and have two types of input jacks. The system requires 110-volt AC wall current. List price: $299.95/pair.

Sony SRS-170

This system is similar to the Sony SRS-200 but with less power — 15 watts per channel at 45 to 20,000 hertz. The DBB circuit emphasizes the bass, and the enclosures are shielded. AC wall current only. List price: $249.95/pair.

Sony SRS 150

With 20 watts per channel at 45 to 20,000 hertz, the SRS-150 packs a lot of punch for its price. Both line and headphone-type jacks are provided, and the enclosures are magnetically shielded. AC wall current only. List price: $199.95/pair.

Sony SRS-77G

The battery-powered SRS-77G normally delivers five watts per channel at 100 to 20,000 hertz, but reaches ten watts per channel when powered from a 12-volt DC car battery through an included adapter. The speakers have volume controls, are water resistant, and have carrying handles for portability. List price: $199.95/pair.

Sony SRS-77G

Sony SRS-67

This speaker system runs on battery power or 110-volt AC wall current using the included adapter. It delivers five watts per channel at 80 to 20,000 hertz and features a bass-enhancement design. The enclosures are magnetically shielded and have independent volume controls. List price: $179.95/pair.

Sony SRS-57

A lower-powered version of the SRS-67, this system delivers three watts per channel and runs on batteries or AC current (adapter included). It has DBB and a frequency response of 100 to 20,000 hertz. Each speaker has its own volume control. We've been testing the SRS-57 for several months and are favorably impressed; it has good, clear sound. List price: $129.95/pair.

Sony SRS-55

Another variation of the SRS-67/SRS-57 design, this battery-powered system is rated at three watts per channel with a frequency response of 100 to 20,000 hertz. It has a volume control and a DBB circuit for bass emphasis. List price: $99.95/pair.

Sony SRS-37

Rated at 1.2 watts per channel with a frequency response of 180 to 20,000 hertz, these small battery-powered speakers join together for easy portability. Each enclosure has its own volume control and power switch. We've been testing this model, and although the bass response is understandably thin, the overall sound is remarkably good for its low power rating. List price: $79.95/pair.

Sony SRS-27

This is a lower-powered version of the SRS-37, delivering 0.4 watts per channel with a frequency response of 250 to 20,000 hertz. Another difference is that it lacks volume controls. List price: $49.95/pair.

Sony SRS-17

This is Sony's lowest-priced amplified speaker system. The SRS-17 is rated at 0.1 watts per channel with a frequency response of 300 to 20,000 hertz. Like the similar SRS-37 and SRS-27 models, the boxes join together for easy transport. List price: $39.95/pair.

GP

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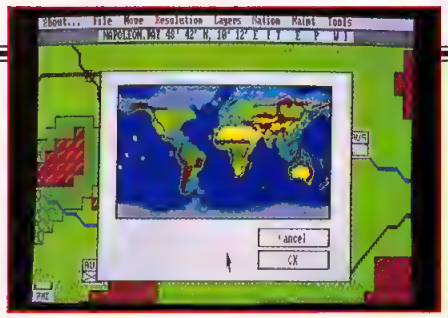

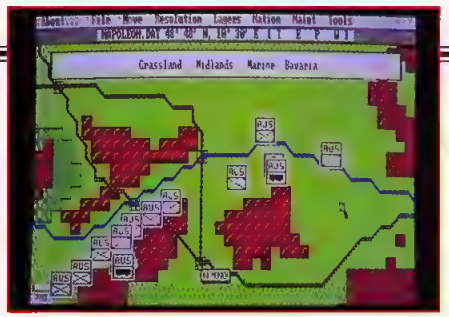

IBM screens shown Actual screens may vary

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Leisure Suit LARRY 5:

Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work

STEPHEN POOLE

Come on, admit it. As soon as you saw the title of the latest installment in the Leisure Suit Larry series, you probably wondered aloud: "What in the heck happened to *Leisure Suit Larry IV*?"

We may never know why those kooky guys at **Sierra On-Line** love to play with the numbers in their sequels (*Space Quest IV* wound up being *SQ X*, *XII*, and *I*) but in the case of *Leisure Suit Larry 5: Passionate Patti Does a Little Undercover Work*, their gag has more portent than perhaps even they realize.

Why? Because *Leisure Suit Larry 5* incorporates the sort of enhancements you'd expect to see phased in over the course of *several* releases. The innovations put in place between *Leisure Suit Larry III* and *V* are so striking that it's only fitting that the title reflects the work that has gone into bringing an all-time favorite into the nineties.

Vinnie
"Yes sir, Mr. Bigg! Our friends in Hollywood have the industry in an uproar. Their 'America's Sexiest Home Videos' show is the talk of show biz!"

The Mob's recent setbacks in its pornography operations have led to a change of venue for the peddling of pulchritude. Little does Larry realize that he's indirectly working for Mr. Bigg.

"MY NAME IS LARRY; LARRY LAFFER"

In case you haven't met Larry Laffer or Passionate Patti before now, a brief history is in order here, especially since there are frequent allusions in *Larry 5* to events that happened in the previous games.

We first met Larry Laffer in *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*. While his leisure suit and gold chains may have at first led you to think he was something of a jerk, you soon realized that he's just an ordinary guy with basically good intentions. After finding true love in the sin-soaked city of Lost Wages, he managed to lose his dream girl in *Leisure Suit Larry II: Looking for Love in Several Wrong Places*, only to marry a tropical beauty he was sure was his undying soulmate.

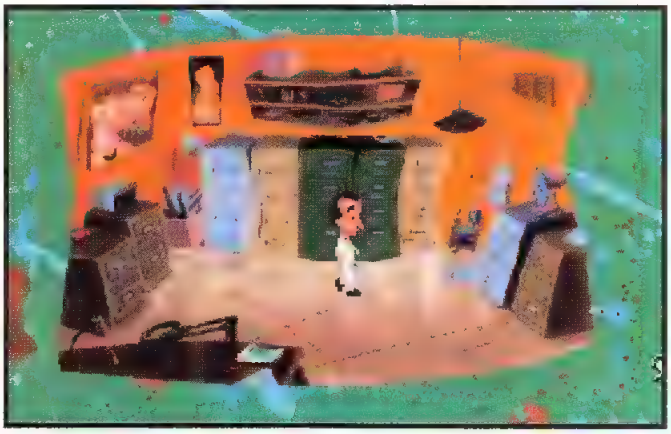
A guy like Larry has a penchant for losing, though, and in *Leisure Suit Larry III: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of Pulsating Pecto-*

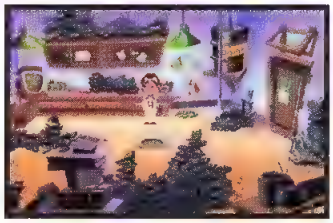
Silas Scruemall
"Well, yes, we do need those tapes to review. But what if we could find an auditioner so inept, so sexless, so lame, so unappealing, that it would take the sexiest woman in America to find him attractive?"

Silas Scruemall, producer of "America's Sexiest Home Videos," needs to locate a true feeb to interview the three finalists vying for the honor to host his top-rated show...

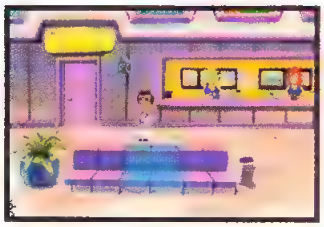
Voila! Only Larry could turn this minor worktime disaster into a major career opportunity!

You've been given the job of clandestinely videotaping the finalists — do you expect help, too? Search this room thoroughly to find clues to the whereabouts of the three finalists.





One look around your workshop is all it takes to remind you that videotapes are your life (at least in this game). Make sure all your equipment is in perfect shape for the candid camera work ahead.



Don't let the seemingly identical Aerodork terminals lull you into unawareness — give in to your consumerist urge and read every advertisement you can lay eyes on.

rals, he discovers his island girl has spurned him. But after nearly three PC games, he finally met, wooed, and won Passionate Patti, a famous musician who's both talented and beautiful. The last time we saw them, it looked as though they were destined for a lifetime of bliss together.

When you begin *Larry 5*, things don't seem to be going too badly for everyone's favorite schmuck. At least he has a job, working as a gofer and errand boy at PornProdCorp — formerly manufacturers of hardcore pornography, now producers of the hit TV show "America's Sexiest Home Videos." And when PornProdCorp's president needs a "dork" to audition the three finalists of the search for America's sexiest woman, it appears that Larry couldn't have asked for a more enjoyable chance at job advancement.

But wait a second — *where's Patti*? Larry's suffering from some sort of graphic-adventure amnesia, and can only remember the vaguest details of their relationship. It's not until Larry heads out for his first audition that we find Patti, playing piano in a gin mill for an audience full of unappreciative drunks.

Larry's old luck must have rubbed off on Patti, because no sooner do we see her leave the stage than she loses her gig, fired at the behest of a mysterious underworld figure known only as Julian. Under

Game designer Al Lowe is NOT just another pretty face.

AL LOWE — THE DIRTY OLD MAN BEHIND LEISURE SUIT LARRY

SELBY BATEMAN

Is Al Lowe really the dirty old man of computer gaming?

On the contrary, the balding and bearded creator of Sierra's very popular Leisure Suit Larry series is neither old nor dirty. In fact, as true Larry Laffer fans know, Lowe is at heart a romantic — who just happens to have a very twisted, and delightful, sense of humor.

He is also a talented and market-savvy computer entertainment developer whose four Larry games have already garnered well over $13 million for Sierra On-Line. Almost three-quarters of a million copies of the four games have sold worldwide, and Larry Laffer is as well known on computers in London and Berlin as he

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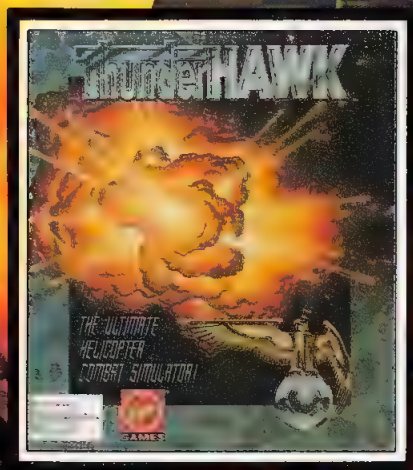
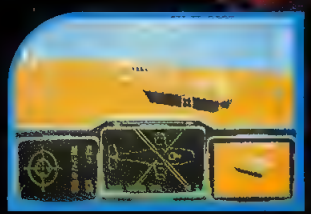


AMIGA SCREENSHOTS SHOWN

Zip up your flightsuit, adjust your sunglasses and control your nerves, 'cause this one makes Nam look like a day at the beach!

DEVELOPED BY CORE



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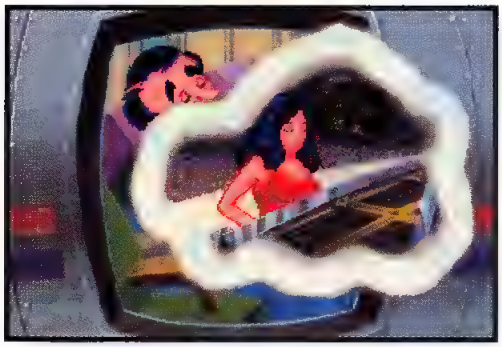
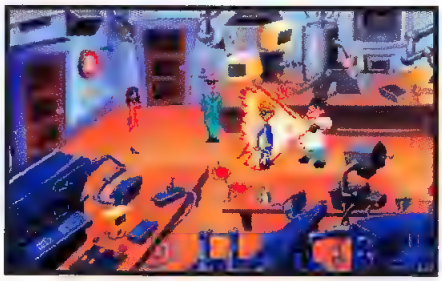


Each time you board a flight, a dream segues the game into the adventures of your female (or male, if you just finished a scene as Patti) counterpart.

Things couldn't get much worse for Patti. Unfortunately for her, good looks, great talent, and a zestful joi de vive *aren't necessarily enough to pay the rent.*

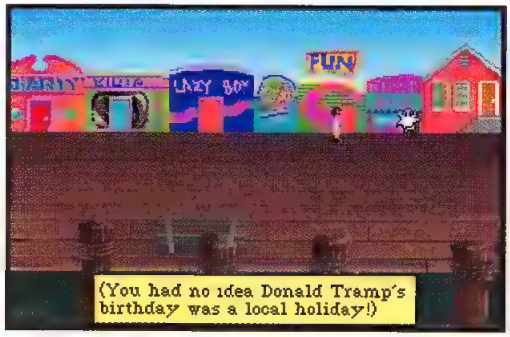
Inspector Desmond
"I'm looking for a special someone, someone willing to take some risks, someone without a family, without many social ties, without any extenuating circumstances to get in the way."

No, it's not Efrem Zimbalist, Jr. — it's Inspector Desmond, the lantern-jawed FBI agent with an offer that Patti is eager to accept.



Q may have taken James Bond on quite a few tours through the lab, but nothing like this ever happened! A beautiful girl like Patti needs protection and *fashion, and a bra-gun serves both needs perfectly.*

After your success at blackjack in Leisure Suit Larry I, *the doors to Tramps Casino are almost irresistible. Say hello to the friendly employees at the door before you head inside to make your fortune.*



At first glance, it might seem that every establishment has closed in honor of Donald Tramp's birthday. There's one shopkeeper you need to find, however, that has personal reasons for ignoring the holiday.

those circumstances, it's no wonder that she eagerly accepts an offer by an FBI agent to go undercover in search of evidence linking the Mob to subliminal and pornographic messages in rock and rap music.

Leisure Suit Larry III featured a gender-bending twist, in that you played the first half of the game as Larry and the last half as Patti. *Larry 5* works much the same way, except that you switch between characters throughout the course of the game.

One thing Sierra didn't change for *Larry 5* was the basic formula for game play. Completing each of the tasks — the three auditions as Larry and the two undercover assignments as Patti — means looking at everything, taking anything you find, and coming up with wacky solutions to the problems you encounter. If you've played any of the previous Larry games (or any Sierra graphic adventure, for that matter), you'll feel right at home with *Larry 5*.

More Is...More

But that's probably the only aspect of the Larry series that hasn't undergone major revision. The changes you first notice will undoubtedly be technical improvements in the graphics, sound, and interface. (If you've seen the enhanced version of *Leisure Suit Larry I*, released just prior to *Larry 5*, you've got a good idea of what to expect.)

is on machines in L.A. and Baltimore.

For those unfamiliar with the libidinous Larry, suffice it to say that this polyester Everyman is a would-be Romeo who keeps tripping over his own unrealistic fantasies as he tries to put the make on anything in a skirt.

What saves the Larry series from being categorized as merely a sophomoric and sexist romp is Lowe's zany sense of humor and a hidden moral compass whose magnetic north is nearer the heart than the regions physiologically south of that point. Add to that the wonderfully playful artwork of longtime Sierra game designer and artist Mark Crowe and teams of talented designers, programmers, and artists. The result is a character and a series that have already begun moving from the status of cult to classic. The Larry series is still a sophomoric and sexist romp, but even the most Politically Correct have to admit that Lowe's tongue is planted firmly in cheek.

Lowe admits that Larry's fame was anything but guaranteed when he began working on the original game, *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*. A former jazz musician who cut his teeth creating such Disney computer games for Sierra as *Donald Duck's Playground* and *Winnie the Pooh in the Hundred Acre Wood*, Lowe let his overactive imagination run wild with the new project.

He set about revamping an earlier Sierra all-text adventure for the Apple II, an embarrassing little number called *SoftPorn*, that Lowe says sold some 25,000 copies at the start of the 1980s when there were only about 100,000 Apple II's in existence. Between the sold copies and the pirated versions, Lowe figures that everyone who ever owned an Apple II at that time must have had a copy of *SoftPorn*.

Larry Laffer dove into the computer game world with a

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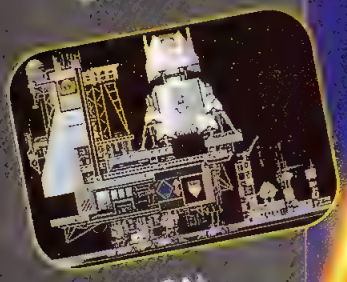

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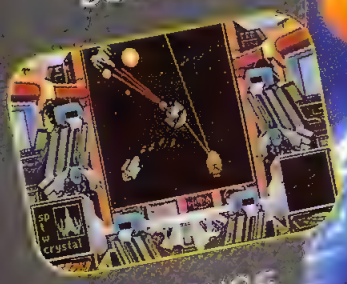

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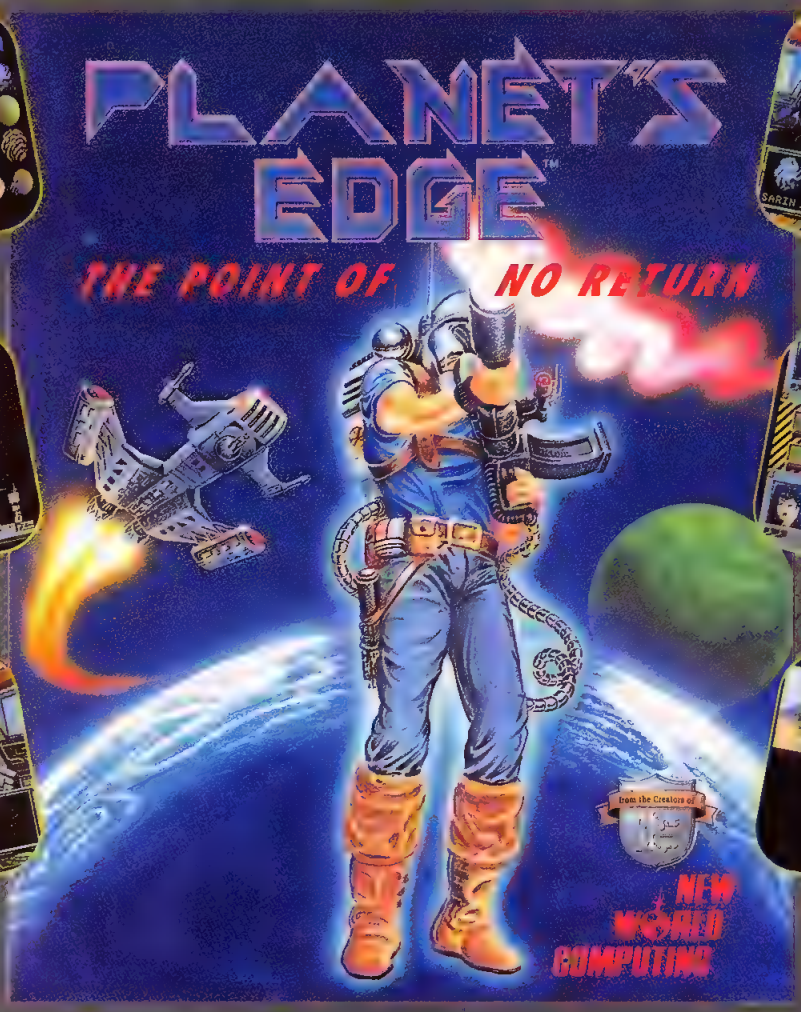
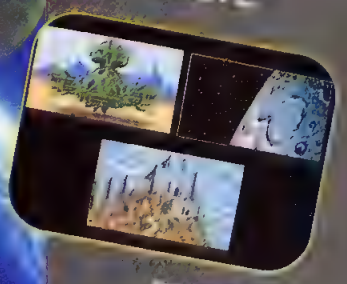


INTERACT

SOLVE



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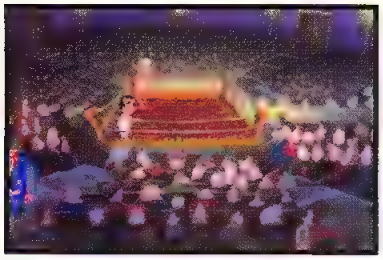
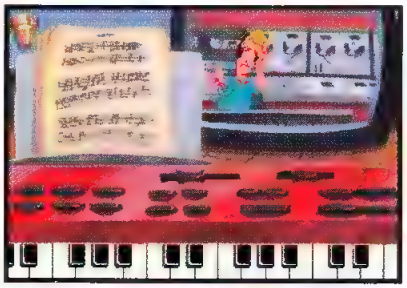


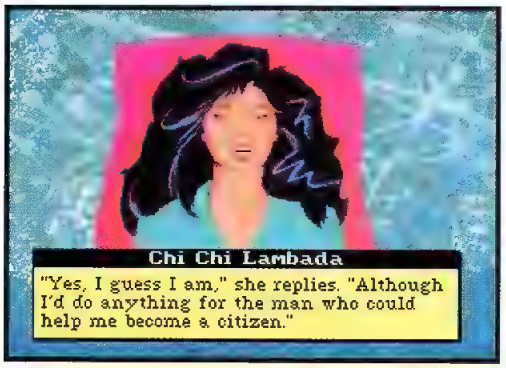
If you want to get up close and personal with Lana in this squared circle of slop, it'll cost you five big ones. Remember: all's fair in love, war, and mud-wrestling.

Patti hasn't received the acclaim she deserves for her musical talent, whereas Reverse Biaz has apparently been overcompensated for his. Perhaps a little wealth distribution is in order here.

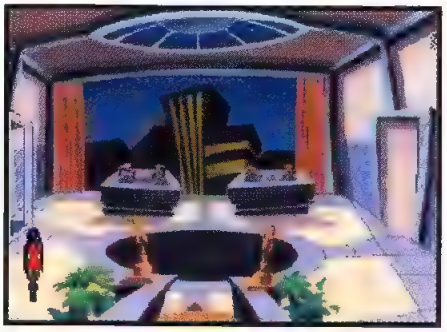
Laying down a hot synth track is no prob for Patti. The real work lies in coaxing some incriminating evidence out of Reverse Biaz.



That frosted sliding glass window hides an equally frosty receptionist, but there are two items you can use in this room that will warm her to your requests.



Larry's always been willing to help out a damsel in distress — especially if she's beautiful, and his job is on the line.



Patti's investigation at K-RAP, where rap group 2 Live 2 Screw is currently in the studio, has left her hands (and face and legs) a bit dirty. You'd better find some way to get cleaned up.

The EGA graphics used in the first three Larry games were certainly good for their time, but they almost look prehistoric compared to the rich, colorful scenery in *Larry 5*. The slightly cartoonish, 256-color VGA graphics deliciously convey an appropriate sense of zaniness and surrealism. (There are EGA and Tandy 16-color versions available.)

Larry 5 has a full soundtrack, one that works to enhance scenes rather than detract from them, changing constantly to fit the locale. And the digitized voices and sound effects are hilarious (you'll love the "evil" backmasked messages Patti hears at Reverse Biaz's studio).

All newer Sierra games use basically the same icon-based, point-and-click interface. Although some players miss typing in "naughty" words just to find out what witty response the designers have thought up, there's no denying the icon-based interface saves you wear and tear on your fingers and your keyboard.

Of course, these are the sort of refinements you'd expect as a result of improved technology. But there are some changes in the aesthetics of game play that may or may not meet with the approval of longtime Larry fans.

For example, you don't need to worry about restoring games because you've met with an untimely demise. Mortal danger lurked around

less than spectacular splash in the summer of 1987. "When the game went out, it bombed," says Lowe, with a chuckle. "It was the lowest first-month sale of any product in years. It took a period of six to eight months before it began to sell respectably. And it was all word of mouth."

In hindsight, the slow takeoff doesn't seem surprising. There had never been a package quite like *Larry* in the computer entertainment market — an adult-oriented game with a wacky sense of humor. The folks at Sierra were understandably a bit uncertain how it would be received. Retailers weren't geared up for it and had no previous experience with that type of game. It debuted in June, a traditionally slow month for computer game sales. But once rolling, the Larry train has done nothing but gain momentum.

"*Larry 2* was a direct result of the feedback we had on the early months of *Larry 1*," says Lowe. "We felt it would be a success, but the feedback early on was that it (*Larry 1*) was too risque, too far out. So with *Larry 2* I tried to swing the pendulum back over and make sure that Larry was looking for true love, more of an adventure game, a quest."

But by the time that *Larry 2* began shipping, *Larry 1* was a certified hit. And the first reactions from *Larry 2* players, says Lowe, was "Hey, what happened? It's too clean! You took the fun stuff out." Lowe says that *Larry 2* actually has more solid humor and a better plot line than *Larry 1*, and the game has been every bit as popular.

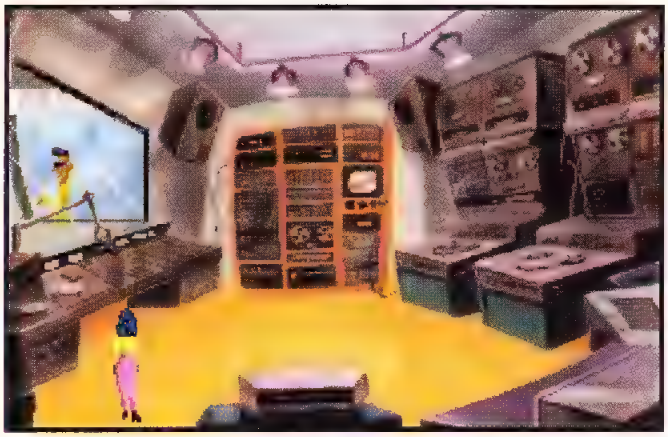
Nonetheless, with *Larry 3*, not only does Lowe introduce the hip, urbane, and worldly Passionate Patti as a major character, but the humor also swings back a bit to the more risque and silly. Now, with the emergence of *Larry 5*, Patti is

every street corner in the city of Lost Wages, and the island of Nontoonyt (*Larry III*) was a veritable death trap. But there's really no way to die in *Larry 5*.

The problems you encounter in *Larry 5*, for one reason or other, just aren't as vexing as what you may be accustomed to. For example, there are often two solutions to a problem — a realistic touch, but one which makes *Larry 5* perhaps the most forgiving Sierra adventure to date. In previous games, forgetting to pick up an item often meant you were incontrovertibly stuck; here, you can solve several problems with or without using an item, and in one instance you're actually given an item if you didn't look for it.

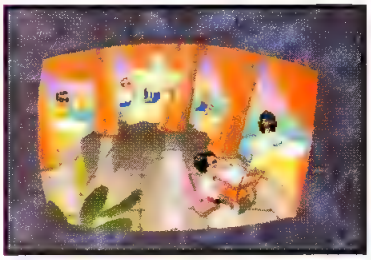
And while all *Leisure Suit Larry* games contain material that some people might consider offensive, the latest installment might be the topper. While most players understand these are all in the spirit of fun, there are a couple of minor jokes and situations that even Larry fans may have a little trouble overlooking.

But no one can accuse Larry creator Al Lowe of playing it safe (see accompanying story). Leisure Suit Larry fans will find that *Leisure Suit Larry 5* has plenty of what they've come to love, and novices will have a great time meeting the world's most adorable nerd.

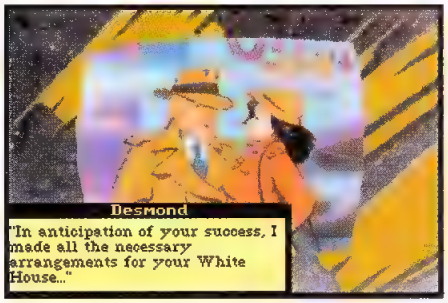


Your performance art skills served you well with Reverse Biaz. Now it's time for a crash course in audio engineering if you hope to get the evidence you need for Inspector Desmond.

You could examine these relics of a bygone computing era for hours. You still have one contestant to audition, though, and a stubborn maitre d' stands in your way.



Talk about power lunches! You've made it into the inner sanctum of the Hard Disk Cafe, but there's still the problem of meeting Michelle Milken.



Well, Patti, you did it! Inspector Desmond rewards your excellent work with a gig at a White House reception in honor of a national hero. Wonder who it might be...?

Why all the hubbub, bub? It's a sure bet that President Bush isn't congratulating you on finding a hostess for "America's Sexiest Home Videos." You'll just have to play the game to find out the reason for all this excitement.

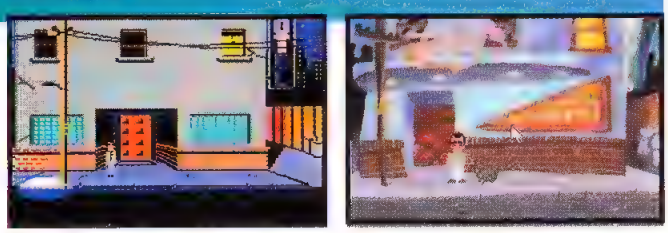
back and the graphics and gags are better than ever.

Where, you might well ask, is *Larry 4*? Well, it doesn't exist. In other words, as Lowe puts it, *Larry 5* is "the fourth installment that just happens to be called *Larry 5*" — which gives you a disquieting glimpse into the nonlinear mind of Al Lowe.

Over the years, the Larry games have changed quite a bit as the technology has advanced. For example, the player interface has evolved from what one British magazine called the "type 'til you bleed" school of graphic-and-text adventure to Sierra's new non-typing "grope-and-click" interface.

Game size is another big change. *Larry 1* hit the retail shelves complete on two 360K disks. In those days, there were plenty of people without hard drives, so *Larry 1* could be played completely from two floppies. *Larry 5* is shipping on eight high-density disks representing some 14-megabytes of data!

Fans will also notice some outrageous new cartoon styles in *Larry 5*, courtesy of creative director Bill Davis and a wonderful team of artists. Lowe says that Davis is also responsible for the new cinematic viewpoint and special visual effects, such as dream dissolves, that are a part of *Larry 5*. Add to all of that a musical score created by Hollywood composer Craig Safan (themes to "Cheers," "A Nightmare on Elm Street 4," and many others), and the result is the biggest and boldest Larry laugher yet.



Larry 1 *has been recently updated with a new 256-color VGA graphics version.*

Watch out for Morales — she'll be a real problem throughout the game. In your first encounter with her, you must determine whether or not a citizen's allegations that she verbally abused him are true. If this is any indication of her conversation with the complainant, your decision seems obvious.

Police Quest 3: The Kindred

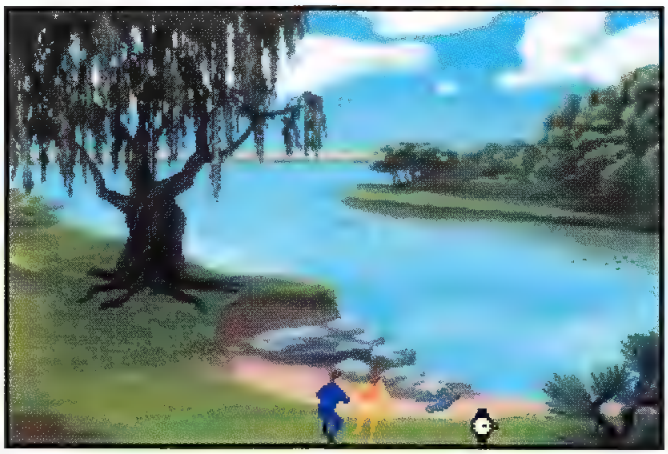
MATTHEW A. FIRME

With all the talk recently of police brutality and soaring crime rates, it's good to know there are still cops like Sonny Bonds around. Since the days of the first *Police Quest* game, Bonds has been a trustworthy and dependable presence in **Sierra**'s fictional town of Lytton, USA. He doesn't take shortcuts, and he always gets his man.

As *Police Quest 3: The Kindred* begins, it looks like all those years of dedication have paid off. Sonny's now a Detective Sergeant. He and his wife Marie are happy, and living in a beautiful new home. Like any growing city, Lytton has its share of crime — but it's not "big city" crime, and Lytton's still a good place to raise a family.

As you might guess, though, Sergeant Bonds' life becomes quite a bit more complicated as soon as you load up the game. And near the end of your first day as Bonds, real tragedy strikes. Sonny's wife Marie is attacked and nearly killed by unknown assailants. Marie sinks into a deep coma, and Sonny's off to find the attackers.

This latest *Police Quest* adventure is a sequel of the best kind. It retains all of the excellent components from the previous adventures — detailed plot, plenty of action, and a premium on authenticity — and adds several new elements that bring new life to the series.



After you've tossed the lunatic's keys in the lake, be ready to defend against his attack. You'll need more than your bare hands, but less than your gun. Did you visit your locker before you left the station?

Police Quest veterans will notice quite a few changes in this latest installment. The most apparent difference is in the graphics. *PQ3* uses digitized photos of actors and 256-color VGA graphics for background scenery, providing a level of realism and impact that can't be matched by the EGA graphics of the first two *Police Quest* games. The characters, from the most crucial to the least significant, are all memorable and interesting. And the settings for each of the game's scenes are as appropriate as they are eye-catching. The back alleys are so vivid you'll almost smell the decay, and when you find a murder victim in a trash dumpster, you can almost feel your skin crawl as you place the hand icon on the body.

Which brings up another significant departure from past *PQ* adventures: the game interface. Gone are the days of the text parser, where almost every action except movement required typing in commands. *PQ3* is the first in the series to use Sierra's new point-and-click interface, which has an icon for every action you need to perform. While the interface will hold no surprises for players familiar with Sierra's other, more recent titles, you might be a bit startled if you haven't played any Sierra games since *PQ2*.

While the new interface is logical and simple enough to be mastered in a matter of minutes, it also takes away some of the fun and challenge inherent to the text parser. No longer can you type "!@#% the suspect" and be rewarded with one of those classic Sierra comebacks as to why that action might not be suitable. And with the text parser, deducing just exactly how to phrase a request could be a challenging puzzle in itself (albeit a puzzle some players will be glad to do without).

But the new interface brings its own challenges to the game. Expect to alternate frequently between the Eye (look) and Hand (use or take) icons, clicking on every item in a scene as you search for clues. You'll

When you see the low rider blocking traffic in the left lane on the freeway, stay just behind him in the right lane and hit your lights.

After you've been clobbered by an ironing board, conked on the head by a rake, run over by a car, burned on a stove-top, flushed down a toilet and squeezed through a wringer, you'll find it's not easy being Roger Rabbit.

If you're lucky, you'll find Baby Herman before his mom returns, in *Hare Raising Havoc*, the first interactive cartoon.

If you fail, though, it's back to the science lab, Roger.

And it's all excruciatingly vivid, thanks to Disney's VGA animation and the incredible cartoon soundtrack, complete with character voices, music and sound effects*.

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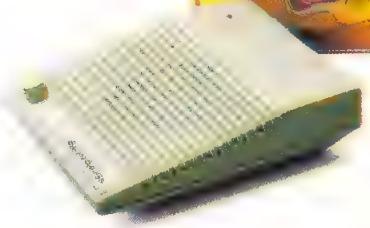

HARE RAISING HAVOC
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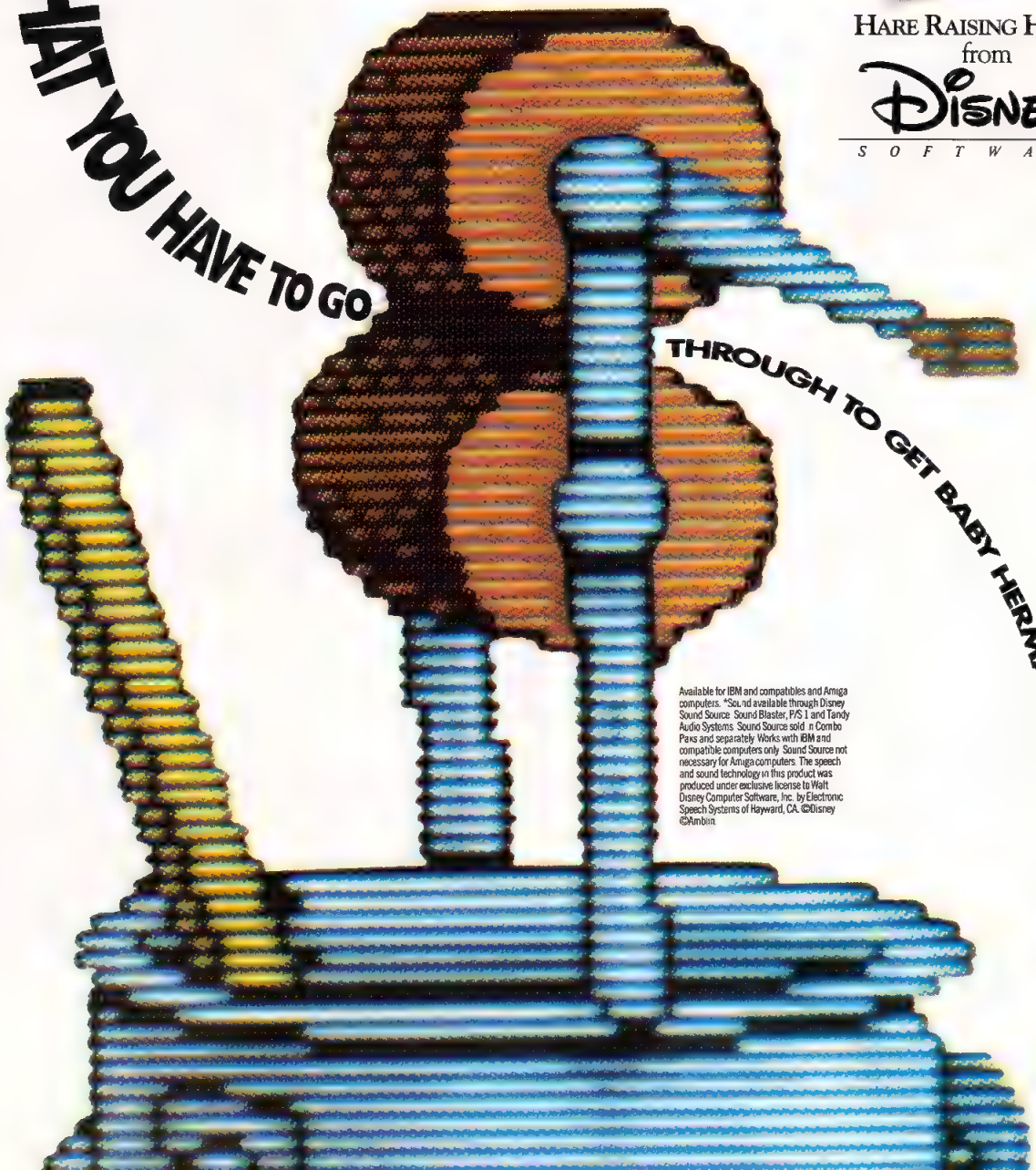
OH, WHAT YOU HAVE TO GO THROUGH TO GET BABY HERMAN BACK.



Available for IBM and compatibles and Amiga computers. *Sound available through Disney Sound Source. Sound Blaster, PS 1 and Tandy Audio Systems. Sound Source sold in Combo Paks and separately. Works with IBM and compatible computers only. Sound Source not necessary for Amiga computers. The speech and sound technology in this product was produced under exclusive license to Walt Disney Computer Software, Inc. by Electronic Speech Systems of Hayward, CA. ©Disney ©Ambrosia.

have to learn to use the icons quickly — in some scenes you must talk to a character before he leaves the screen, or pull your gun before the thugs beat you to the draw.

Rounding out the new *PQ* facelift is a good soundtrack by Jan Hammer, an award-winning studio musician largely responsible for the *Miami Vice* soundtrack. The music is nicely tailored to each scene, be it a gunfight or a tender moment between Sonny and Marie, and Hammer's style is unmistakable. You might find yourself turning the music off as the game progresses, though. As good as the music is, some players might find it distracting after many hours of involvement in the game.

You'll have only a few seconds as Marie is loaded into the ambulance — check her hands.

The game unfolds over the course of six days, and each can be a long one — especially the first day, before the action really starts heating up. Early in the first day, you'll be called to respond to a disturbance of the peace at Aspen Falls recreation area. To get there, you'll have to hop in a squad car and drive — the game's only major drawback.

During the driving sequences, most of the screen displays the interior of a car, with a tiny inset window showing a bird's-eye view of your car moving down the street. No scenery in the inset — just a curb on either side of the street, with occasional breaks in the curb at intersections. To control your car, you position the cursor just in front of the car to accelerate, just behind to break, and to either side to make a turn.

These sequences get tiresome *very* quickly. To make matters worse, you can't turn

Back at the crime scene, a sleazy reporter approaches and begins to question you. Don't let him get away before you tell him exactly what you think of him.

Thanks to the story written by your newspaper acquaintance, a witness has come forth. This bag lady insists she saw someone in the area where Marie was attacked. But she won't leave her cart unless you can guarantee it won't be stolen.

Pay careful attention as the lady describes the man she saw. Each feature must look OK to her, or you won't get a match.

When you're subpoenaed in the low rider case, double-check the squad car to make sure you have everything you need before leaving for the courthouse. If you can impress the judge, she might be a valuable ally later.

HOW'D YOU FEEL IF SOMEONE PLUCKED YOU OUT OF YOUR CHAIR, STRAPPED A ROCKET PACK ON YOUR BACK AND PLOPPED YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF A LITTLE MACHINE GUN FIRE AND FLYING NAZIS?

Throw in some brawling with storm troopers, dodging V-1 missiles and dogfighting amidst a squadron of enemy fighter planes, and you'll begin to get the feel of what it's like to be *The Rocketeer*.

And even if you make it this far, you still have to rescue Jenny from a horde of Nazi captors, while keeping the rocket pack out of their hands.

Add 256-color VGA digitized graphics of actors and actual movie sets, along with Disney's realistic speech, music and sound effects*, and the excitement gets even more intense.

Thrillseekers, hold on to your seats.

THE ROCKETEER from Disney SOFTWARE

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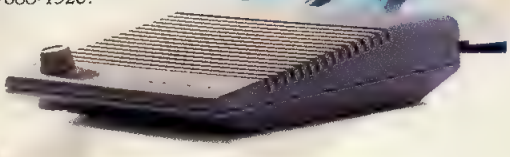

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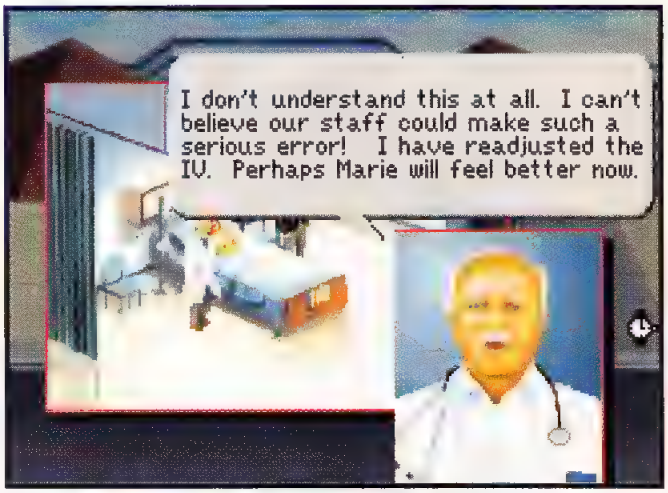
I don't understand this at all. I can't believe our staff could make such a serious error! I have readjusted the IV. Perhaps Marie will feel better now.

Even when you're off-duty, vigilance always pays. Being the caring husband that you are, it's only natural that you would carefully read the doctor's chart on Marie's bed to make sure everything checks out.

the car around if you miss a turn, which is easy to do. If you position the cursor too near the edge of the driving window, it changes to a function icon. If the cursor is too near the center of the window, you might accelerate when you mean to turn. And there's a momentary lag when the cursor changes — often all it takes to foul you up.

When you get the chance to check Morales' purse, you'd better move quickly. If anything's missing when she returns, you'll be in real trouble. If only there were a way to make a copy of what you find....

Although these sequences might do a good job of simulating the tedium a real cop faces, they seem out of place in a *game*. By the third day, you may find yourself dreading the idea of getting into your car even one more time.

Once you do reach your destination after that first drive, you're rewarded with a very pretty scene at the park.

You've got a lot of police work to do at this crime scene. Check the chest and hands of the victim, and look for some identification. Then take a look around the alley, and collect samples of anything that seems out of place.

But the picnickers enjoying the lakeside vista are upset, and for good reason. A nearly nude lunatic has been running around, ranting and raving incoherently. When you approach him, he screams something about aliens coming to take our water—then, without warning, he runs up to you, grabs your badge, and throws it into the lake! He dives in after it and stands in the water, ceaselessly taunting you whenever you try to calm him.

This first bit of police work is full of learning experiences for *Police Quest* rookies. Obviously, you'll have to get the crackpot out of the lake. The specific police guidelines in your manual can help you through almost all of the situations you'll encounter. But some predicaments, like retrieving a disturbed man from a lake, call more on common sense than anything.

Do you wade in and cuff him? Try it, and you'll learn an important rule of police work — never put yourself at risk unnecessarily. The nutcase will drag you under the water, drowning you in a matter of seconds.

Search the man's clothes and you'll find his keys, which elicits an hysterical response from the lunatic. Noticing that he's fond of the keys, and since nothing else has drawn any response, you hurl the keys into the lake. The madman swears to kill you, charges from the lake, and grabs you by the throat. Once again you learn an important lesson: if you're being attacked, defend yourself — but remember to use an *appropriate* level of force.

Once you've figured out how to deal with the lunatic, you'll have learned many of the procedures that will serve you well through the rest of the game. Be alert, search everything in a scene, and always follow procedure. Whenever an odd situation arises, consult your police manual; chances are you'll find the answers you need to move on to the next phase of the game.

If you've correctly calculated the pattern of crimes, this could be the site of the next murder. The car sitting out front looks familiar — it couldn't hurt to slip a tracking device on it.

While most of the events in days two through six are interwoven and flow naturally from scene to scene, there's a point in the first day where you can very easily miss some important events, because you might never think to do what's required of you.

After dealing with the lunatic, you'll be called to assist an officer on a nearby freeway. You might think that once you've taken care of the problem you were called to respond to, you should just get off the first freeway exit and return to the station. But if you do, you'll

"Tracy, I've got just what you need," cooed Breathless Mahoney.

"The thug you're looking for is holed up on the wharf."

I hit the ENTER key and returned to the squad car. Then I slammed the left CURSOR all the way down and sped off to Pruneface's hideout. If I was going to crack this caper, I had to make him spill the beans.

As I raced along 8th Street, a radio call crackled over the Disney Sound Source.* "Calling Dick Tracy, calling Dick Tracy," blared the dispatcher's voice. "Bank robbery in progress at 9th Street and C Avenue." A moment later, I arrived at the scene of the crime where I was greeted by a hail of bullets. I reached for the SPACE BAR to return the fire. Suddenly, I went down.

It took valuable time, but they patched me up and got me back out on the street.

There was still a lot I had to learn about this crime.

In the meantime, I could only hope that Pruneface hadn't skipped town.

DICK TRACY from Disney SOFTWARE

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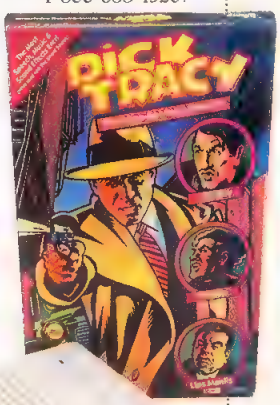

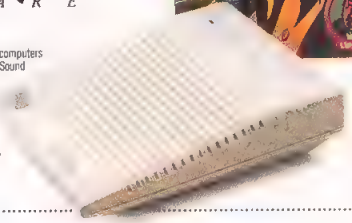

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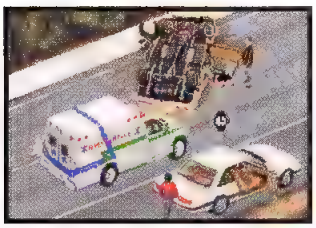
trigger the scenes of Marie's attack, and set in motion an automatic series of events that lead to day 2. And you'll miss some of the things you're supposed to do on day one.

So after the incident with the pregnant motorist, *stay on the freeway!* You'll have to drive it's entire length, back and forth, until you stop — and ticket — a speeder, a low rider, and a drunk driver. You'll have to go to court for one of the cases, and that experience will bring about other events necessary to complete the game.

Once the attack on your wife occurs, you'll move into the exciting and detailed search for her assailants. This will lead you to new locations and characters, and you'll have to put them all into perspective if you're to solve this case. Although there are a lot of variables, the plot is always logical and your course of action always clear — with a few confounding exceptions, of course. But if you look hard enough, if you conduct your investigation the way Sonny Bonds would, you'll find the solutions to even the trickiest problems. There are no red herrings here, and no illogical leaps of faith are required. What you will find is solid, enthralling, and absorbing action — enough to both challenge and satisfy even the most demanding gamer.

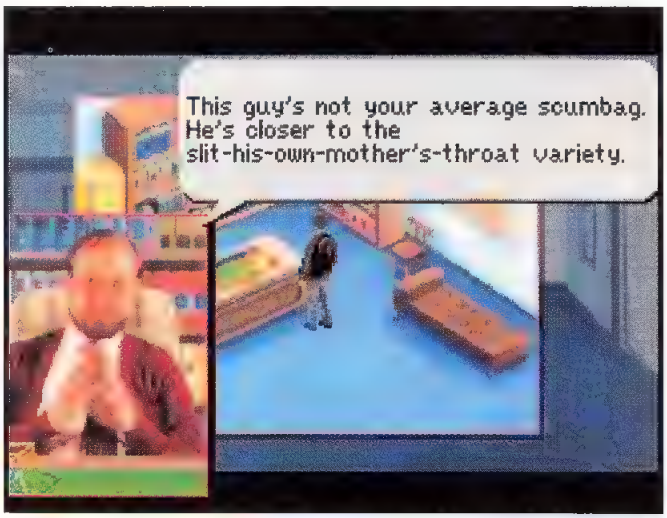
GP



After a high-speed chase, the suspect loses control of his car and wrecks on the highway. Lay down some flares, get the keys from the ignition, and check the trunk for evidence. In this instance, quantity is more important than quality.

Armed with suspicion (and Morales' locker combination) you head downstairs to find out just what she's been hiding — but you'll have to get the janitor out of the way. Be sure to take notes on anything you find.

You go to the address of the thug who died in the crash, and find his home ablaze. But some evidence is left behind, including this photo of your old nemesis, Jesse Bains!



Don't move in on your suspect until you're sure what type of criminal you're dealing with. For the complete story, you might want to visit the police psychologist.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA graphics (EGA and Tandy versions available); hard disk required; supports Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, Roland, Thunderboard, and Sound Blaster sound cards; supports mouse (highly recommended).

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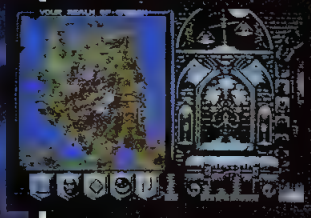

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NEIL RANDALL

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NAME AC HP
KAUNAS -1 23
VILNIA -2 28
FE'THOS 1 28
EASWELL 1 17
GULAIL 3 21
KAEVISH 8 24
KLAIPEDA 10 12
15,5 E 09:49
THE PARTY IS THROWN ON THE HARD STONE FLOOR OF A WINDOWLESS ROOM. YOU LOOK UP TO SEE A MAN WITH A LONG FACE AND THIN, CRUEL LIPS, DRESSED IN A BLACK ROBE. YOU RECORD WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AS JOURNAL ENTRY #22.

Each major event is accompanied by an explanation and a colorful graphic. Here the party has just been captured.

With *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*, we enter an entirely new fantasy role-playing world. As part of the Forgotten Realms lands of the AD&D universe, the Savage Frontier offers ruins, seas, deserts, and a magical forest or two. Your task is to make sure the whole area doesn't get wiped out by invaders.

This **SSI** game represents the beginning of a new line of FRP modules using the AD&D system. Unlike the modules set in the Dragonlance universe (*Champions of Krynn* and *Death Knights of Krynn*), *Gateway* contains no special character types, no special rules, and no special occupations. Instead, it returns to the straightforward AD&D system begun with *Pool of Radiance* and proceeding through *Curse of the Azure Bonds* and others. A straightforward gaming system, but nevertheless engrossing.

On the battle display, each character is under your control unless you choose the Quick option to allow the computer to control a character for you.

Throughout play in *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*, you're presented with a multi-part playing screen. The top left corner shows either a first-person perspective or, if you choose, an overhead view of where your party of adventurers is marching.

As you explore, you encounter non-player characters, monsters, and others. When combat occurs, the screen shifts to a tactical battle display. From here, you control the actions of all, some, or none of the characters (you can opt for the computer to take charge). Proper tactics are crucial to success in this game, to the extent that learning the battle system is probably your most important task—it's easy to be overwhelmed in battle if you're not truly prepared.

Gateway's storyline puts you in the role of, essentially, defender of the realm—*realms*, actually, because this is hardly a unified place. The Zhentarim general Vaalgamon, the inevitable bad guy, is trying to locate four magical statuettes. These relics contain the power he needs to open a safe passage for his troops through the Great Desert. The desert borders the Savage Frontier to the east, providing it a much-needed natural defense against invasion. The Savage Frontier has no real leaders or defensive forces, so once safe passage is found through the desert, the Zhentarim will have no trouble taking the Savage Frontier completely.

It turns out that you don't find out about the statuette storyline until several hours after play begins. First you have to find the good mage Amani-

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Your party is attacked by giant squids. The blue represents water, in which ranged weapons and fire spells don't work.

tas, and he's not exactly standing in the open waving you down. He knows the locations of the four statuettes, and the Zhentarim are holding him in prison.

So how do you get to Amanitas? You fight. Like the rest of the AD&D series, *Gateway* refuses to offer a system of truly quick combat; you have no choice but to fire up the tactical battle display and slug it out with the monsters.

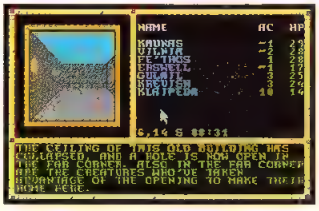
You have full control over all the characters in the party (except any non-player characters that join you along the way), and the choice of battle strategy is entirely in your hands.

What's encouraging in *Gateway*, as an example of the evolution of the AD&D gaming system, is that the designers have streamlined the system to the point where combat is now faster and much more manageable than ever. But I'm still waiting for the day when the length of an AD&D game (and *Gateway* is longer than most) depends more on storyline and exploration possibilities than on combat hours. *Gateway* is an improvement over other AD&D modules, but it's still far too combat-intensive.

I've complained about this before in this column, and it's likely I'll do so again. In good fantasy literature, battles are climactic events, not daily occurrences — winning a battle is a big, big thing, and extremely important to the plot. In far too many FRP games, the only reason to fight is to gain experience points and the cash necessary to advance to the next level. After a while, it simply becomes mind-numbing.

So why pick on AD&D games when so many FRP titles are similar? Because with their strong popularity and impressive market share, AD&D titles have the clout to make positive changes. Give us more to explore, more to solve (not just frustrating puzzles), and make combat more exciting by reducing its frequency. There.

Complaints aside, veteran AD&D players will be pleased by the continued improvement of the overall game system as evidenced in *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*. Of particular note is the increased importance placed on the Fix command. To explain this clearly, especially to AD&D novices, we first need just a bit of background. During your travels, you must stop in order for your party to rest, to memorize new spells, to heal wounds, and so on (this is done with the Encamp command). Once encamped, you can do all of the above, as well as change the marching order of the party, set game defaults, save your game to disk, etc.


NAME
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GOLWIN
MARVISH
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THE CEILING OF THIS OLD BUILDING HAS COLLAPSED AND A HOLE IS NOW OPEN IN THE FAR CORNER. ALSO IN THE FAR CORNER ARE THE CREATURES WHO'VE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE OPENING TO MAKE THEIR HOME HERE.

A collapsed ceiling and an unknown brand of monster — it's dangerous, but the situation certainly warrants investigation.

The easiest way to heal wounded characters is with the Fix command (you can also use healing spells or pay for healing at a temple, but using Fix is the easiest way). In earlier AD&D games, you typically used Fix to heal wounds, then had your magic users memorize or rememorize their spells and have them rest (via the Rest command) until the spells were memorized.

In *Gateway*, the Fix command both heals wounds *and* rememorizes spells, all with one keystroke. This is extremely convenient, not to mention quite a timesaver. The only caveat is that you must use the Magic option to memorize different spells, or to memorize new ones that your magic users learn when they increase an experience level. Nevertheless, the Fix command demonstrates a commitment on the designers' part to revise the system in favor of playability.

But it's arguable that the AD&D system as it now stands is as playable as it's likely to get. What SSI needs to do now, it would seem, is determine whether the system as a whole needs a thorough rethinking. Yes, the market would probably bear a continual set of AD&D releases, each one with minor enhancements and improvements. But the art of computer game design refuses to stand still, and perhaps it's time that this popular series tried something new.

THE PARTY APPROACHES THE GLOWING STATUE, A WHITE-HOT FLAME SUSPENDED IN MID AIR OVER A TRIANGULAR BASE. EASWELL PASSES A HAND ACROSS ITS TOP, THEN SAYS 'IT DIDN'T BURN ME. I THINK IT'S SAFE TO TAKE IT!'

After a long fight and search, the party captures one of the statuettes. Only three more to go, and then on to endgame.

In the meantime, though, the game system has proven itself once more in *Gateway to the Savage Frontier*. All in all, this is among the most interesting of all the AD&D modules, and certainly the one to buy if you're a newcomer to the series.

GP

EXTENDED FORECAST FOR SAN FRANCISCO. MOSTLY CLOUDY WITH A SLIM CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.

The outlook for the City by the Bay in the 21st Century is grim. A toxic cloud has billowed into town, smothering half the inhabitants. You're a hard-nosed cop called upon to soar through the cloud choked streets in your advanced XB500 hoverbike and defend the dwindling population. Especially now that the cloud provides a sinister smoke screen for the evil doings of a rabid pack of criminals, The Black Angels. Your mission is to net the ringleaders and solve the mystery of the cloud that kills.

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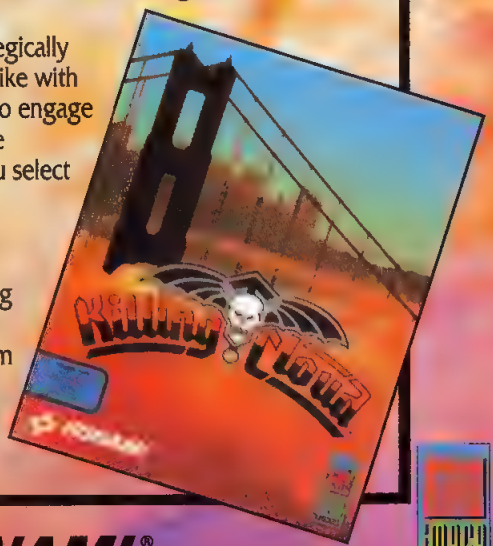
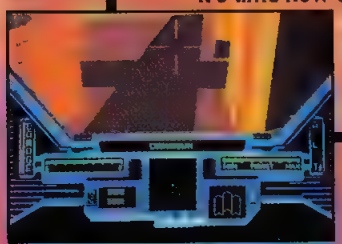


It's time now to don your foul weather gear and shield the citizens from the suffocating smog. See for yourself why the Killing Cloud will take your breath away.

Available Fall 1991 for MS-DOS and Amiga.



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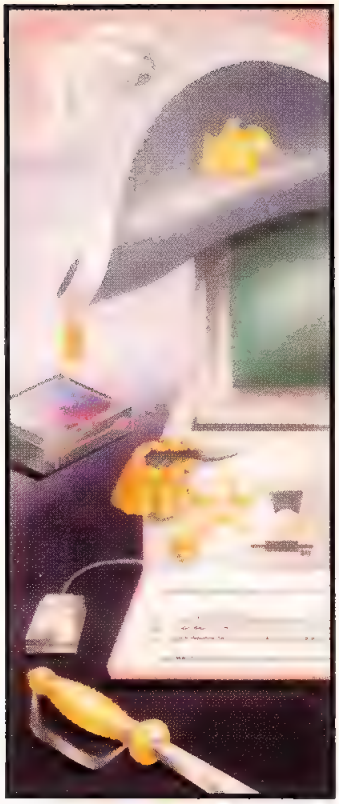

THE DESKTOP GENERAL

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY

The grand-strategy scale of the game is well-served by its maps and data screens.

Five years ago, while doing research for my trilogy of books about the Civil War in North Carolina, I was surprised to learn of the way relations between Governor Zeb Vance's administration in Raleigh and the Confederate government in Richmond had deteriorated to the point where both Vance and Davis dropped all the flowery Victorian rhetoric and began blasting each other with letters that should have been written on asbestos instead of paper.

Time and time again, Richmond blundered in its relations with this part of the Confederacy, scandalously neglecting the coastal defenses and alienating the entire western third of the state through brutal taxation and conscription policies (about 5,000 Tar Heel mountaineers became so disgusted with the Confederacy that they made a long, dangerous trek to Kentucky and enlisted in the Yankee army!). Davis also spurned, humiliated, and withheld support from numerous top-notch regional generals while shamelessly furthering the careers of toadying nincompoops like Braxton Bragg.

I finished my literary project with a generally low opinion of Jefferson Davis; he seemed impossibly stiff-necked, arrogant, meddlesome, and strategically inept.

But after a week of compulsively playing **SSI**'s new Civil War game, *No Greater Glory*, and immersing myself in the Big Picture as-seen-from-Richmond (or in this case, Atlanta, since you have the option of relocating the Rebel capitol early in the game), I have a newfound sympathy for ol' Jeff. The problems he faced, both politically and militarily, were overwhelming, and this game gives you a very keen understanding of them.

No Greater Glory is a war game on the highest level of grand strategy — you cannot jump in (much as you may want to) and take tactical command on the battlefield. Each game turn represents roughly three months, during which you must make presidential-level decisions regarding domestic politics, finance, international relations, and theater-of-war scale military movements.

Although the game is quite easy to play, it contains a *vast* amount of sub-surface data and embodies a remarkable sense of balance between its various causes and effects, and the choices you must make.

Designed by Dr. Ed Bever, whose *Revolution '76* game was favorably reviewed in this magazine about a year ago, *No Greater Glory* is a very individual program, one that makes you fully appreciate Clausewitz's dictum that "War is the province of friction."

Most players will opt to lead the Confederacy, since that's where the greatest challenge lies, and they will learn right off the bat that most of the friction is political. No matter how balanced and rational your

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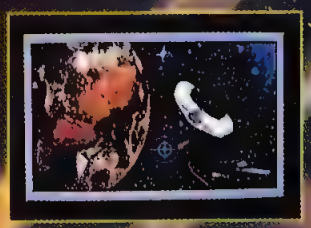
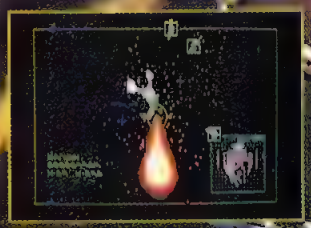
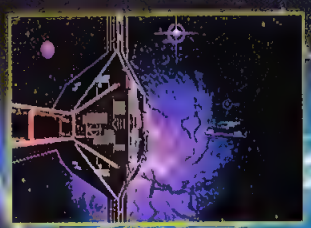
YOUR MISSION.

Test the Mantis. There's just one catch. You're going to take it right into heavy combat against the deadliest enemy mankind has ever known.

That's it, men. Scramble your Fighters. And be careful up there.







Actual screens may vary

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appointments may seem, some contentious region or prideful commander is going to object. And if you override those objections, you lose popular support and the insulted generals lose some of their battlefield effectiveness.

Dr. Bever's program does a powerful job of re-creating the daily problems that confronted Lincoln and Davis, and his compression of the economic dimensions of this war into a *playable* game is nothing short of masterful. This game will intrigue and delight Civil War buffs (I've been playing almost without pause for five days) and probably provoke some delicious catfights in print among the *cognoscenti*.

I can only voice immense respect for the way this game brings to life the central dilemma of the Rebel states: because of the way it defined itself, the Confederacy was stretched on a rack of paradox. It was fighting the first "total war" in American history, a conflict in which political, social, and economic elements were as important as military prowess, and it was fighting against an enemy capable of mobilizing vast industrial resources and enormous manpower. To fight such a war, a government must be able to coordinate all the resources it can command: both strategic and economic planning must be centralized and efficient.

Nationalism is usually the binding force that permits such centralized power to function, but that particular glue was absent in the CSA. To prosecute the war rationally, efficiently, and with the greatest vigor, Richmond required strength of will and coercive power, and exercising that type of power meant setting aside civil and local authority and rights in the name of a larger common cause.

These realities, however, crashed head-on into the concept of untrammeled states' rights, the main pillar of Confederate ideology. And when wartime necessity conflicted with sectional autonomy, the friction was intense, disruptive, and sometimes tragic in its effects. *No Greater Glory* does a striking job of bringing that paradox to life in its proper historical context.

Why, then, am I almost ready to pick up my monitor and hurl it through the window in frustration?

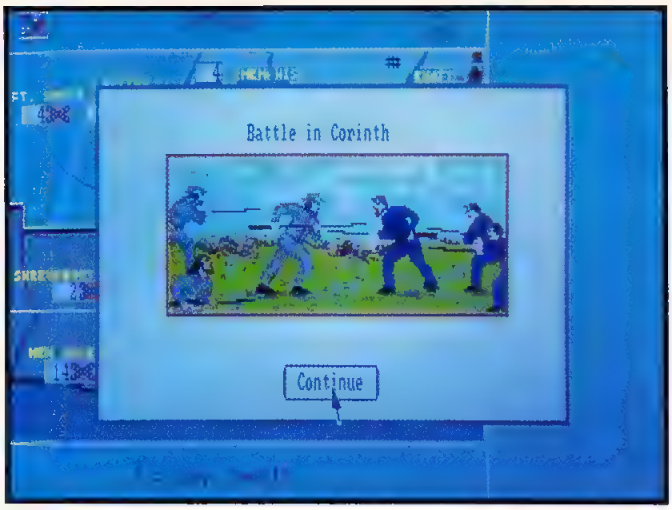
Perhaps because my own hard-earned expertise (admittedly focused on a single region, but one which in many ways typified the kinds of political friction described above) conflicts with Dr. Bever's. Perhaps because, to me, the heavy emphasis on the economic/political factors makes the military situation so hopelessly one-sided from the start that I ultimately become fed up with the game and begin cursing it at the same time I'm admiring it.

Here are a few of my objections:

If the generals' characteristics are set on "historical," one would expect being able to do dramatic things with the likes of Lee and Stonewall Jackson. In all the games I've played so far, mediocrities such as Leonidas Polk and Ben Butler have enjoyed outstanding success, while Lee, Jackson, and Nathan Forrest have come up sucking wind.

Why is Joe Johnston (one of the most accomplished professional soldiers in the Confederate Army, even though Davis cruelly misused him and fired him on the eve of his greatest victory) given a lower ability rating than a footpad like Bragg? And where is General Longstreet? Surely, if Dr. Bever can include a nonentity like Leonidas Polk in the CSA lineup, he could make room for "Lee's warhorse"!

Why is the Confederate Navy limited to building two commerce raiders per turn? In every game I've played, these ships were utterly ineffectual and easily sunk. But in reality just one such vessel, the legendary CSS *Alabama*, caused enough havoc to shake the entire maritime insurance industry of the North. Why does the computer keep telling me that Secretary of the Navy Mallory is "incompetent" when, in fact, he was one of Davis's best appointments and one of the men responsible for the *Albemarle* class ironclads (which the game, incidentally, will not let you build) that, for a brief period at least, struck terror into the whole U.S. Navy?



Much of the game's strategy conveys a sense of historical verisimilitude, but the cartoonlike graphics undermine any feelings of realism.

Why does the game allow the Confederate player to allocate funds for the construction of coastal forts, then not let him choose where those forts should be built?

And why the huge number of "complaint" screens, effectively compromising any rational Confederate strategy? Over and over again, the computer interrupts to tell you that General Cornpone protests that he deserves a bigger command than the garrison of East Bumbershoot, Georgia. Now, if you do *not* reassign Cornpone to a bigger command, he loses "prestige" points and your administration loses support from his home state. So you more or less *have* to reassign him — and any other general who takes umbrage — or you soon begin to lose the war.

OK, fair enough: I gave him a command twice as large, and then spent 15 exasperating minutes reassigning all the other generals in order to make *them* happy (rather like a game of musical chairs). After all this, Cornpone comes back and demands a still larger command. But if there is no bigger command in the area, you have to move the man to another part of the Confederacy (unless you want to suffer the penalty) then rearrange your entire command lineup *again*. Under these circumstances, coherent strategy becomes impossible.

And on an aesthetic level, there's no excuse for the generic graphic scenes that appear whenever there's a battle or a significant political event. These are the same coarse and cartoony graphics used in *Revolution '76*. How much more would it have cost to digitize some of the dramatic reenactment photos included in the manual, or, for that matter, some actual period daguerreotypes? Not much. How much better would the game look if that had been done? About 100 percent. I sincerely hope the Bevers earn enough from their royalties to afford a good PC paint program....

Enough.

I can't remember when a game has inspired in me such a dichotomy of reactions, from profound admiration to foaming rage.

Conclusion: every Civil War buff who owns a computer ought to try this program and make his or her own judgment. I advance these remarks not to pan *No Greater Glory*, but just to indicate the range of argument it is likely to provoke. And when all is said and done, I'd rather tussle with a provocative and downright eccentric program like this one than another "me-too" game.

Now, Civil War fans, the verdict is up to you. This Confederate desktop general is gonna retire to the veranda and have a nice, cool julep.

GP

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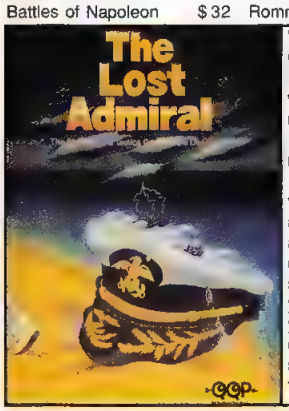

'LOST ADMIRAL' from **QUANTUM QUALITY PRODUCTIONS** is a turn based production naval strategy game. Features 9 scenarios, a random map scenario, 15 campaign games, flagships with special abilities, very strong artificial intelligence, in depth officers ranking system, accumulates your career history as you play, 2 player option, and sound board support. In short better than **EMPIRE.** **$34**

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'WORLDS AT WAR' from **RAW SOFTWARE** is a game of naval combat on a galatic scale. Simple in concept, you can play the tactical study for an hour or the campaign game for a weekend. Features include hidden movement, random map generation, design your own task forces, capture planets to build more units. **CGW** said "...like **EMPIRE**, what this game has is play-value". **$29**

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'HOME ALONE' from **CAPSTONE** is an action game based on the movie. You play Kevin trying to foil Harry & Marv. You hurry to create traps & pitfalls from the attic to the basement. Your tools are common household items. Soon Harry & Marve appear for the chase. You attempt to lead them into your traps. Features digitized sound & graphics in 256 color VGA, with sound board support. **$27**

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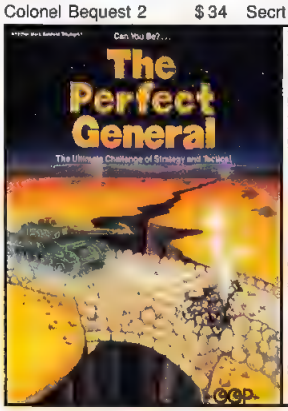

'PERFECT GENERAL' from **QQP INC** is a turn based ground war game. Features 12 years of play testing, great maps in VGA, easy to use mouse or keyboard interface, 14 scenarios, very strong artificial intelligence, hidden movement, line of sight option, in depth player ranking system, saves your career history as you play, 2 player option, modem play, sound board support. **$34**

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'TRUMP CASTLE II' from **CAPSTONE** puts you in Atlantic City at the Trump Castle Casino Resort with actual digitized images and sound from the casino itself. Features include 256 color VGA graphics, sound board support, digitized animations and multiplayer capability for six gambling games, baccarat, blackjack, craps, roulette, video poker, and slot machines. **$32**

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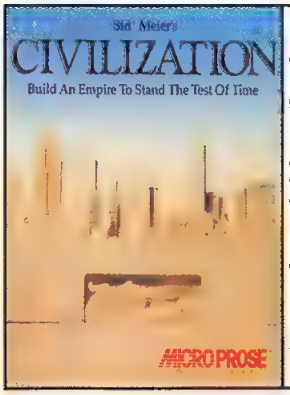

'CIVILIZATION' from **MICROPROSE** "is a competitive multi-player strategy game with a great deal of replayability" **CGW**. You explore cities, continents, and the world in an **EMPIRE** like way. You make economic decisions prioritizing technological growth in order to advance your civilization more rapidly than the other players. The best of both **SIMCITY** & **EMPIRE**. **$39**

'THE TWO TOWERS' from **INTERPLAY** is a roleplaying game based on Book 2 of the **LORD OF THE RINGS**. Battle orcs, trolls, wargs, ghosts, & oliphaunts. Travel through Fangorn Forest, over mountain passes, past the fortress cave complex, through the marsh and arrive at the two towers. Features automapping, digitized speech, point & click interface, 256 color VGA & sound board support. **$37**

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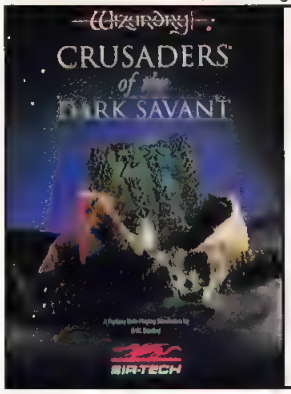
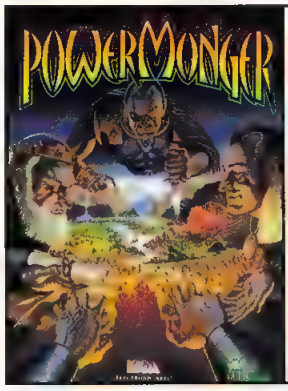


'CRUSADERS OF THE DARK SAVANT: WIZARDRY 7' from **SIRTECH** is high tech fantasy roleplaying at its best. **WIZ 7** includes multiple beginnings, outdoor campaigns in caves, forests, rivers, dungeons, and a complete city. NPCs talk to each other & entire computer controlled parties compete with the player. Features point & click interface, 256 color VGA & sound board support. **$39**



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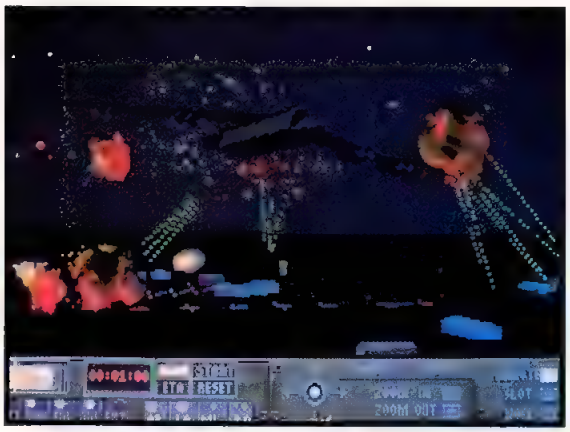
VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

OLD DOGS AND NEW BIRDS



Things can get pretty intense on the last leg into a primary target in Megafortress. *Threading the needle successfully on higher level missions requires concentration and quick response.*

They line lonely storage airstrips outside of Tucson, Arizona, like hundreds of beached sharks, their high black tails and dark bodies still eerily managing to radiate a sense of menace. These desert airstrips are the elephant burial grounds of the U.S. Air Force's inventory of "retired" B-52 Stratofortress bombers.

While its days may be numbered, the B-52 is far from dead. During the Vietnam war, Stratofortresses based in Guam regularly rained tons of high explosives at a time upon targets in North Vietnam. When the conflict in the Persian Gulf erupted, the Air Force relied on B-52s rather than high-tech B1s to carpet-bomb fortified Iraqi positions at the front.

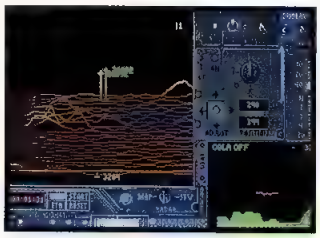
The Stratofortress has figured prominently in recent fiction as well. In Dale Brown's 1987 best-selling novel, *Flight of the Old Dog*, a pre-glasnost Soviet Union neutralizes the nuclear arsenal of the United States with a massively powerful ground-based laser system. In a desperate effort to restore the balance of power, a highly modified B-52 sets out to penetrate the Russian air-defense umbrella and attack the laser facility.

Three-Sixty's *Megafortress* puts you behind the flight stick of "The Old Dog" for a fascinating look at the complex ballet of processes and actions required to successfully execute a B-52 mission. In this well-conceived simulation, you assume the responsibilities of five crew members. When wearing the pilot's mantle, for example, you assume responsibility for takeoff, flying, mid-air refueling, damage control, and landing.

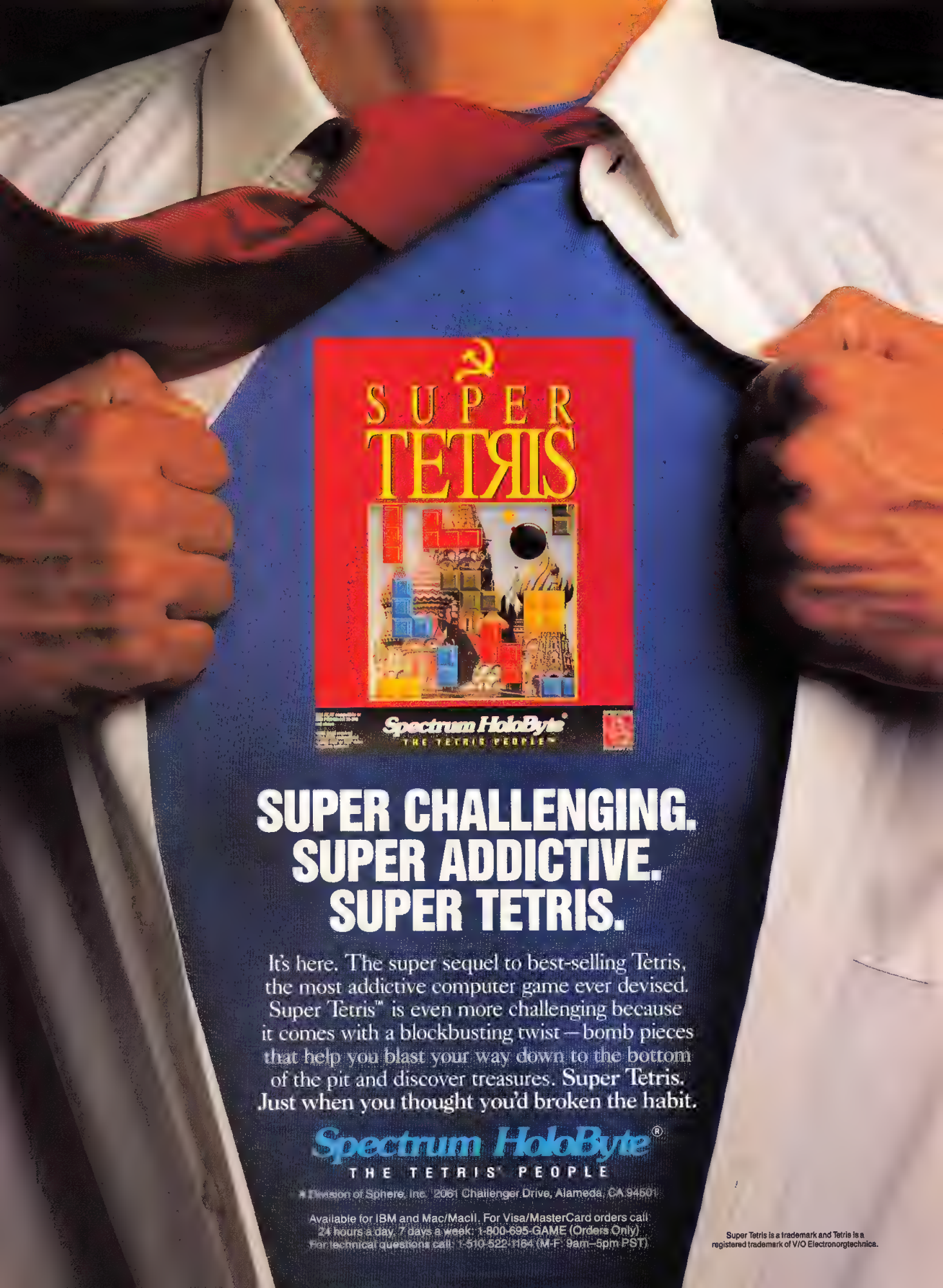
If you've ever wondered what a copilot really does, it doesn't take too long to find out in *Megafortress*. As chief flight engineer during a mission, the copilot monitors fuel status, electrical systems, hydraulics, cabin pressurization, and general communications.

Getting off the ground won't do you much good if you don't know where you're going. As in real life, the navigator handles navigational radar, route planning and plotting, waypoint tracking, weapons delivery action points, and actively advises the pilot on bearing changes during low-level combat maneuvers.

The electronics warfare officer (EWO) is in charge of the Megafortress's advanced countermeasures equipment. Upon entering hostile airspace, the EWO detects and monitors both air and ground-based threats and suppresses their attempts to track the incoming bomber. Air-to-ground and air-to-air weapons are under the sole control of the offensive-weapons officer, who's re-



Keep the Megafortress low and slow to avoid enemy radar —and don't forget to take advantage of the plane's 3-D terrain guidance radar.



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sponsible for delivering the payload and handling any interceptors that have managed to get within striking distance.

If you get the feeling that a mission aboard the Megafortress is no Sunday picnic, you're absolutely right. Even the simplest missions require a high degree of coordination between the personnel at different stations. During occasional frenzied moments, the whole process often feels like a high-tech juggling act.

Megafortress is a decided departure from the run-of-the-mill flight simulator. If you're used to flinging supersonic fighters around, be aware that the flight characteristics of a subsonic, 400,000-pound aircraft have all of the finesse and charm of a Mack truck. Although the graphics change substantially from one crew member's station to the next, the Megafortress has a much more static feel than that of fast-action sims.

Whether you're tooling around over the Air Force proving grounds north of Las Vegas, skimming the desert in the Middle East, or attempting to fly the climactic mission of Dale Brown's book, *Megafortress* serves up a stiff, satisfying challenge for simulation buffs looking for a change from the usual flight sim fare.

If heavy bombers aren't your style, perhaps futuristic whirlybirds are. Building on the previous success of its popular *Gunship* combat helicopter simulation, the design team at **MicroProse** has launched the updated sequel, *Gunship 2000*.

Gunship 2000 (or *GS2K*, as it's called by hard-core sim buffs) sports all of the requisite improvements we've come to expect from sequels to best-selling combat simulations: snappy VGA graphics, punchy soundtracks, digitized sound, and the now-obligatory Persian Gulf scenarios. However, *2000* expands upon its progenitor's premise and point. The original *Gunship* posited the player as a lone flyer. In *2000*, you act as flight leader of a group of five copters.

The operational parameters of each assignment (which are created on the fly by *2000*'s mission generator) vary considerably. Before undertaking a mission, the flight leader can choose up to three different types of helicopters from a wide selection. For general mayhem, heavily armed AH-64A Apaches, UH-60K/L Blackhawks, AH-1W Cobras, and AH-66A Comanches fill the bill quite nicely. For covert reconnaissance, the peeping-tom capabilities of the AH-64B Longbow's mast-mounted radar are a natural. Want to keep things cooking on the ground with a handful of Hellfire missiles? A couple of OH-58D Kiowa Warriors will do the job. If sheer speed and maneuverability are your top priorities, the MD-530G Defender can deliver.

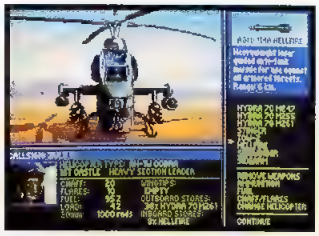
It's time to rock and roll above the Gunship 2000 *theater of operations. When things get hot and heavy, take extra care not to "overcontrol" your chopper. A gentle touch is a must.*

The armament of each chopper can be customized to suit both taste and mission requirements. Weapon selection is suitably up to date — besides the familiar Sidewinders, Mavericks, and TOWs, more recent missiles such as Stingers, Helstreaks, and Sidearms are faithfully modeled.

The cast of ground-based friendlies and foes is diverse as well. More than 50 different tanks, armored fighting vehicles, missile batteries, enemy helicopters, and warships keep things fresh from mission to mission.

Within serious simulation circles, some criticism has been aimed at two aspects of *Gunship 2000*. Since the game is synchronized to the computer's main microprocessor rather than to a real-time clock, the passage of mission time and the control response varies depending upon the speed of your computer. Given the current state of programming art, this is a definite blemish — a 20-minute mission should take the same amount of time to complete on a 386SX system as on a full-bore 486 machine, without resorting to slowing down the faster computer.

Another carp concerns the accuracy of the helicopter flight models in *Gunship 2000*. Helicopters handle far differently than fixed-winged aircraft. They may be easy enough to get off the ground, but according to former combat pilots with whom we've chewed the fat, maneuvering a chopper in the heat of battle requires intense concentration and excellent coordination. Some die-hard helicopter fans claim *Gunship 2000*'s "realistic" flight mode provides handling that's far more forgiving than the real thing and does not allow a number of maneuvers that seasoned chopper pilots can execute — such as flying forward in a sideways flight attitude, or emergency autorotation. We'll have to beg off taking sides on this one...we found that the advanced handling setting was enough to keep our hands full in the heat of a combat operation.



Gunship 2000*'s ordnance screen lets you saddle up your chopper with custom-rolled munition loads. The weapons selection menu satisfies even the most demanding palates.*

Whatever your stand on the flight-model issue, the fundamentals of this simulation remain true to life. Success, and subsequent promotion, are based on the overall success of the missions you lead rather than how many enemies you're able to fry. For our money, *Gunship 2000* admirably delivers a challenging and exciting introduction to the problems, strategies, and execution of close air support on the modern battlefield.

GP

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ARMADA 2525

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

This is one of the latest in a long, honorable line of conquer-the-galaxy games (the avatar of the genre was probably SSG's *Reach For the Stars*) which combine resource management, military strategy, and space opera on the grandest scale. One judges new games in this genre not necessarily by how original they are, but by how skillfully the designers play variations on a basic theme that is known, and loved, by a generation of game players.

Your battlefield is the whole galaxy. If you select "hidden planets" you'll need to send out scout ships to locate suitable worlds.

In this case, designer R.T. Smith has produced a gem for **Interstel**: simple to play, chock-full of strategic possibilities, and highly addictive. Up to six players may participate, or a single player can compete against five computer-controlled rivals. You may set the personalities and playing styles of your computer opponents, from wild-eyed xenophobes who lash out at anyone who comes in range to hermetic isolationists who wage war only when provoked.

Each race begins with a single planet and must expand, through colonization and development, in order to build up strength. Development hinges on how many production points the player can assign to each planet at the start of every turn. Naturally, the richer the planet, the more resources there are to be developed, but hostile and irradiated planets can also be colonized if the player's technology is advanced enough to permit enclosed or protected colony bases.

Sooner or later, you'll meet — and probably fight a war with — another race (or races) which is trying to make the neighborhood its own. Transport ships are cheap to produce, and a large fleet of them can make colonization of large amounts of territory an easy matter. But transports are sitting ducks when they're jumped by warships, and newly founded colonies are defenseless until the colonists have enough build-points to set up missile batteries and defensive shields.

Guns or butter, right? But there's another element here, perhaps the most interesting strategic concept woven into the game: If you're willing to invest in long-term research and development projects, you'll eventually be able to build all kinds of marvelous superweapons and terraforming systems. The trick is to stay militarily viable long enough for some of those advanced goodies to roll off the assembly lines — but every build-point you invest in research and development is one less you can invest in warships and missiles.

One basic strategy might be to willingly accept a period of military weakness, hoping your opponents won't annihilate you before the research pays off and you come roaring out of your corner of the galaxy in a paroxysm of violent expansion fueled by weapons of unimaginable power. Forget wimpy hardware like photon torpedoes — if your research is successful, you can drop gigantic death-spores that gradually *eat* the enemy's missiles, factories, and laboratories!

Even if you miscalculate (or have the misfortune to border a race of aggressive, technologically superior xenophobes) and lose *all* of your colonies, you can still make a comeback if you bide your time and plan shrewdly. Here's how to do it:

Concentrate on building planetary defenses. Invest in Doodlebugs — cheap, expendable "coast defense" ships that *always* get blown up, but usually take a bigger, more costly enemy ship with them. Then spend every build-point you can on missile and shield defenses. Even the most formidable defense system you construct can *eventually* be worn down by an enemy fleet of Nemesis ground-attack ships,

Consult the "War Table" to learn the current state of galactic politics.

Spaceship combat fills the screen with fireworks, but you can abort the battle scenes and just get the final results if you get tired of watching.

but to do so, the enemy must come at you with everything he has over a span of several turns. But if the enemy opts for that sort of onslaught, he must leave his own colonies virtually defenseless for a long, risky time.

Next, sink everything you can into research and development until you reach a level of advancement that permits you to build artificial planets (they're expensive, but that kind of technology isn't chopped liver). Once you've created one, build up a colonizing fleet and scout the far reaches of space until you find a star with no planets of its own.

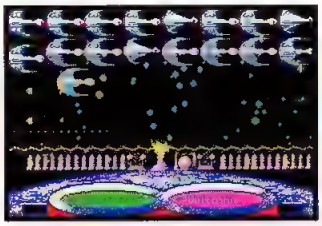
Go there and put your man-made world into orbit, and, presto, you're back in the colonizing business. More often than not, it takes several turns before the computerized aliens realize what you're doing, and by that time you should have enough Doodlebugs and missiles to withstand their attacks. Repeat this process until you're strong enough to conquer an enemy colony, and you will have scored a triumphant comeback from the brink of extinction.

Spaceship battles are resolved on colorful, slightly tongue-in-cheek screens filled with zany looking ships hurling long, snaky streams of plasma balls, rays, and high-tech projectiles at each other. Each type of ship has its own defense and attack strengths; when a ship's defenses are weakened to the breaking point, it vaporizes before your eyes.

Every player will find a mix of ship types that suits his personal tastes, but you'd do well to include a few carriers. These giant vessels possess no true offensive capabilities of their own, but can release clouds of smaller craft which converge on the enemy's ships like swarms of stinging insects. You have some control over tactics, too, and can even launch kamikaze assaults which permit a weaker ship to devastate a much stronger enemy vessel.

Planetary assaults are depicted in a manner that pays homage to the classic videogame *Space Invaders*, with missiles firing upward at orbiting, slowly descending enemy fleets. We never got tired of watching all this colorful mayhem, but if you do want to cut right to the chase, hit the Esc key and get a readout of the final results.

You can opt for games of a specific length, or play open-ended games that may stretch out over many hours. There are several levels of difficulty, too, which give the game even more playability.



Planetary assaults are depicted in a manner that pays homage to the classic Space Invaders.

Interstel's manual is blessedly short and simple (would you believe 19 pages?!), but judging from the inordinate number of typos, it apparently received short shrift in the proofreading department.

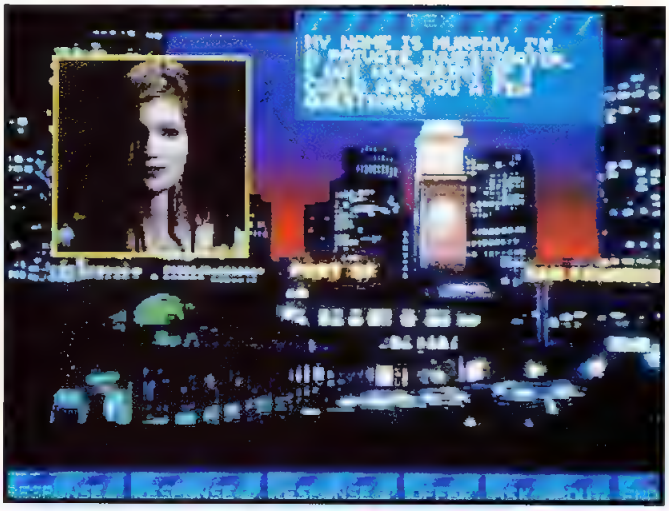
Oh, well, typos-schmypos. The bottom line for *Armada 2525* is that it makes galactic conquest more fun than a barrelful of monkeys. Enjoy!

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, or EGA graphics; supports Ad Lib and Sound Blaster sound boards; supports mouse.

MARTIAN MEMORANDUM

GARY MEREDITH



Chantal Vargas can provide the names of several other informants, and perhaps a couple of suspects, but she'll have to be coerced with some evidence about her recent "indiscretions."

Marshall Alexander is dead, ritualistically slain by someone else who wanted the Oracle Stone. You've done all you can on Earth, so now you must track down Rick Logan, and find a way to Mars.

The years have been less than kind to Private Investigator Tex Murphy. Like everyone else, he's under great strain from the constant exposure to radiation in the post-holocaust San Francisco of 2039. But what's really put the lines and creases in Tex's face are the years spent trying to recapture the glory of his "big" case.

When we last left our hero (in *Mean Streets*), he was seen literally riding off into the sunset with the beautiful woman who had hired him to find the person responsible for the murder of her father. While working on that case, Tex had stumbled onto — and foiled — a conspiracy to control the world. Since those glory days, however, his stock has plummeted. So it was understandable that he'd jump at the chance offered to him by the powerful industrialist, Marshall Alexander.

Tex's office is the headquarters for his investigative work — and it offers a view into certain activities incriminating enough to pry some clues from a reluctant informant.

Alexander's daughter, Alexis, has disappeared in a suspected kidnapping, along with something else of great value, to which Alexander alludes in only the vaguest of terms. That "something else" is the Oracle Stone, a priceless artifact of a long-dead Martian civilization, and there are people who would gladly kill to gain possession of it. The missing stone and the missing daughter are interrelated, and they lead Tex into the slimy underside of Terran society and out onto the desolate wastelands of the Red Planet.

Like *Mean Streets*, the first **Access Software** game that put you in the role of P.I. Tex Murphy, *Martian Memorandum* plops you right in the middle of a fantastic plot. And with only a few exceptions, it plays exactly like its progenitor.

The name of the game here is investigation. There are a number of places to visit, both on Earth and on Mars, and more importantly, a number of people to question. Interrogation is something of an art in *Martian Memorandum*. Although some of the people you meet are willing to spill their guts without much provocation, most folks need either skillful verbal manipulation or something done for them before they'll come clean.

In terms of structure, the game is fairly free-form, but in some cases, there is a particular order you must follow to obtain all the information you'll need. With a few of the more stubborn people, you'll need a great deal of patience in questioning — the multiple-branch question-and-answer system often leads to a lot of experimentation before you discover the right sequence of questions and replies.

Another element of play

Big Dick Castro has his dirty hands in all the criminal activities on Mars. For some reason, he thinks you have the Oracle Stone, and is prepared to do whatever is necessary to get you to talk.

that *Martian Memorandum* has in common with *Mean Streets* — and with every other game in this genre — is using items you find. Since Tex can carry an unlimited amount of cargo, it's a good idea to grab anything and everything you can. Although many of the items will turn out to be useless, you never know what you'll need and when you'll need it.

When you search a scene, don't assume that all the items will be in plain view. The Move command should get a lot of use in this game, as, more often than not, a needed object is hidden under something else. Also, be aware that in many instances there's more to a scene than is shown. A good idea, whenever arriving at a new scene, is to move Tex (with the cursor keys) to the far sides of the screen. Often, as in the abandoned freight car scene, the screen will scroll to reveal other areas to search.

Do we really need to say once again that saving frequently is essential to success? In some scenes — particularly the hoverboard and the quicksand scenes — you can die quickly, unexpectedly, and repeatedly. Fortunately, the save feature is fairly easy to use, although it becomes a bit clumsy as the list of filenames for saved games lengthens.

There are a couple of minor flaws in the save-game function, however. Titles of saved games are actually DOS filenames, and are therefore limited to eight characters. It's often difficult to clearly describe a scene in that small a space. Another problem shows up after you've completely finished playing the game and attempt to erase the game from your hard drive. If you've used spaces in any of the saved game filenames, DOS may not recognize these files when you try to delete them (some file management utilities can help though). So it's best to avoid spaces when saving games.

Like all Access games, *Martian Memorandum* is beautiful to look at. The digitized scenes, especially those of the Martian landscape, are quite stunning. In the special effects area, the designers have improved the lip-synching of the animated characters considerably. With faster PCs, the effect of a character talking (particularly through a Sound Blaster board) is quite realistic, and this game foreshadows what multimedia applications will bring to the gaming world.

You've found Alexis Alexander and the Oracle Stone, but your victory will be meaningless unless you can free yourself from the clutches of the mad scientist. Maybe Alexis has something that will help.

The interface is one of those that you'll either love or hate at first, but using the mouse cursor in conjunction with the keyboard function keys soon has you zipping through scenes. A very handy feature of the interface is the help option. If you're stuck in a scene, you can progressively pick up more explicit clues by accessing the help menu. In fact, just looking at the menu can give you an idea of what items you should be searching for in a particular scene.

While *Martian Memorandum* does have a couple of minor eccentricities, it is nonetheless an absorbing and beautifully rendered game, and a worthy successor to *Mean Streets*. It certainly points the way to the near future, when computer games will be less like games and more like interactive movies.

GP

To save the Priestess, you'll have to find some way of using the bad guy's weapon against him. Since he has a laser pistol, those mirrors might suggest something.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory (10 MHz 286 or faster recommended); VGA/MCGA graphics; hard disk required; supports mouse (recommended) and joystick; all major sound boards supported.

MIGHT AND MAGIC III:

BERNARD YEE

We have a new king. With its huge world, myriad monsters, items, and spells, its terrific mouse-based interface, and dazzling graphics and sound, *Might and Magic III* takes its rightful place on the throne of computer fantasy role-playing games. But it's not an enviable position, since rapidly advancing technology is bound to bring on worthy contenders for the crown. Nevertheless, *Might & Magic III*, from **New World Computing**, will prove one hard king to topple.

You never know who you'll meet in the Isles of Terra. This one is pretty easily vanquished, but others, especially those with breath weapons or spells, are exceedingly difficult to kill.

The gaming system uses many elements familiar to veterans of the Might and Magic series. There's the handy automapping feature, the magic system based on spell points and gems, the non-player character hirelings, and the Wizard's Eye spell.

What's new about the system is the interface. It uses the same type of first-person perspective made popular by the groundbreaking Amiga game, *Dungeonmaster*. And, as in SSI's *Eye of the Beholder*, the true point-and-click command input system means most game functions can be handled easily with a mouse. But unlike most games in this genre, *M&M III* takes place not in a dungeon or castle, but in an entire world filled with swamps, mountains, towns, castles, ruins, and, of course, plenty of monsters.

In the *M&M III* game world, day passes into moonlit night, while your characters consume food and sleep, and hirelings line up to get paid. Special events happen on certain days of the year — miss one, and you've got to wait a whole year before it comes around again.

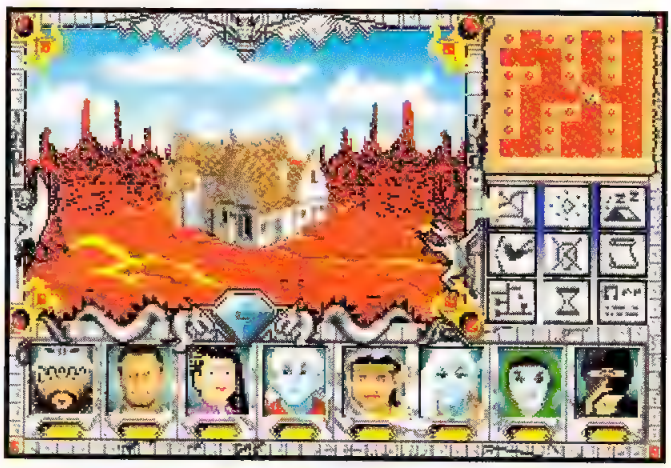
The premise of the game revolves around the battle between the powers of good, evil, and neutrality, a conflict brewed by your old nemesis, Sheltem. You must discover the secret of Sheltem (it's a doozy), following the trail left by the wizard Corak. You can start with a pre-rolled set of characters or create your own from a typical lineup of classes (such as rangers, paladins, and druids) and races (half-orcs, elves, gnomes, etc.).

As in *Eye of the Beholder*, you can select a player portrait from a small but ethnically diverse group of males and females. Each portrait assumes a different expression for sleeping, being poisoned, going insane, and being in diseased and depressed conditions — and some of these expressions are quite amusing. A ninja doesn't look so menacing with a frown and his tongue lolling out of his mouth.

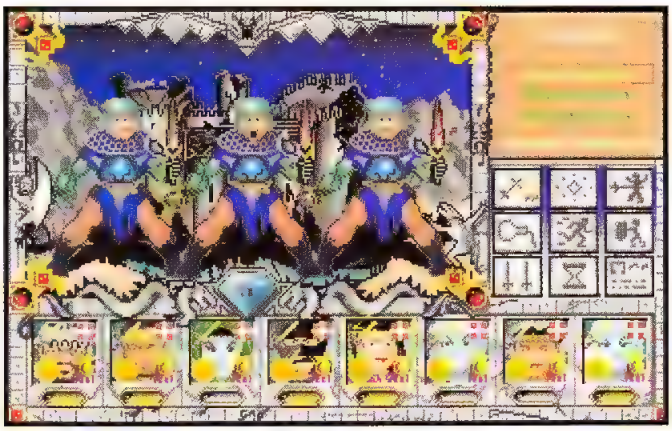
Your party consists of six characters and two hirelings (who have to be paid every day — the higher their ability level, the more expensive they are).

M&M III has the largest viewing window of any of the popular first-person point-of-view FRPs. Through it you see animated monsters of incredible variety, spiraling fireballs, and plains of fire. The soundtrack is quite good, with sound effects that bring aural life to rushing fountains, opening gates, and wounded fighters.

Beneath each character is a gem, which is used to indicate general concepts of character wellness. A green gem indicates complete health, a yellow one means injured, red signifies dangerously unhealthy, blue is unconscious, and a tombstone shape is self-evident. For those who prefer statistics, there's a detailed display that reveals



The Isle of Fire should be avoided by all but the most experienced party with high fire resistance — demons, dragons, and devils populate the exquisitely rendered, and very dangerous, landscape. Blistering Heights is a safe haven from the heat.



The ruins of Castle Greywind hold the secrets of Greywind the Illusionist, trapped in spells of his own making. Barbarians roam the island, but the castle holds many more dangerous enemies.

exact numbers of hit points, spell points, health points, and other figures.

You move around the world, encountering benign characters with riddles, items for sale, and quests for you to embark on. You also meet slavering beasts, in which case you'll end up in combat. During each character's combat turn, you can click on an icon to fight, block, use an item, cast a spell, or run. When damage is inflicted, blood-red splotches explode on your enemy — or on your portrait. These splotches vary in size, depending on how much damage is inflicted relative to the character's total hit points.

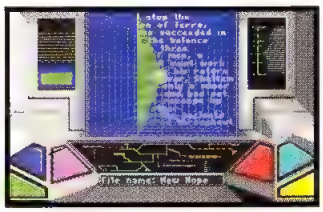
Your first quest is to save the town of Fountain Head, where you begin the game. You'll have to defeat the Rat Overlord and his Moose Rat underlings. They're quite tough, so enlist the help of the hirelings in the Forty Winks Inn and explore the area outside Fountain Head for some experience and treasure. After that, the Moo Temple southwest of Fountain Head provides a profitable diversion, as do the caverns below the town of Baywatch.

From this point on, the game becomes less linear. You can visit anywhere if your characters are strong enough. When you try to bash down doors in some locales, you'll find that the game won't allow it — this means you're too weak to take on whatever's behind the door. Similarly, there are various cryptograms to solve and puzzles to unravel, but there are few places where you'll botch your chances to win. That's user-friendly game design.

The manual provides only a backdrop to the game, so you have to find spells as you venture forth. Finding out exactly how effective a spell is requires an old-fashioned method — use it against some orcs.

Lest you think *M&M III* is a perfect game, there are a few criticisms to be considered. In the wake of the trend to impose realism on games, *M&M III* eschews believability for playability. There are so many special items scattered around the world (like wells that offer temporary hit points and spell points, and attribute bonuses that make for easier fighting) that it makes you wonder why the bad guys aren't using all these natural wonders just sitting out in the wilderness. And what are those things doing there in the first place?

Curiously, the graphics sometimes border on being cartoonish, while at other times they're quite surrealistic. The Carnage Hand, for instance, is a disembodied hand that looks like blue sky and clouds, as if Magritte had rendered it with a VGA palette.



What does this have to do with the fantasy world of Might & Magic III? *Wait and find out, all shall be revealed to those who hack and slash....*

There's only one save-game position per party, although you can have multiple games going on at the same time. A note-taking feature would have been nice, since there are so many hints and clues everywhere. Also lacking is an object-management system — dropped items disappear forever, and there's a huge number of objects to find and use.

All in all, *Might and Magic III* is state-of-the-art by any standard. The coming entries in the field of dungeon-crawl games, like Origin's *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss* and Sir-Tech's *Crusaders of the Dark Savant*, will have a rough go at dethroning *Might & Magic III*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, or Tandy graphics; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Roland, and Tandy 3-voice sound boards; supports mouse.

ARE WE THERE YET?

LESLIE MIZELL

Every now and then you get an update on how the family's vacation is progressing. The news is never good.

It may sound like a game for children, but don't be fooled. *Are We There Yet?*, from **Electronic Arts**, is a tough challenge for strategists who find most puzzle games too easy.

Drake Mallard and his wife and kids have won fourth place in a national sweepstakes. Their prize? A trip across the U.S. to visit obscure landmarks, museums, and tourist sites. How obscure? Not many travelers are familiar with California's Rouge et Roir Cheese Factory and outdoor Shakespeare theater, Max Nordeen's Wheel Museum in Illinois, or West Virginia's Big Ugly Lake.

Your goal as puzzle-master extraordinaire is to fill in, state by state, a map of the U.S. Each time you solve the puzzles for the two destinations in each state, it's added to the map. You can travel to only a few states at the beginning of the game, but as you complete puzzles, you gain access to adjacent states.

Don't congratulate yourself when you've completed this Nevada jigsaw—there's still a concatenation to solve before you leave this destination.

More than a dozen different types of puzzles are included in the game, ranging from the familiar magic square, word search, rebus, jigsaw, and word jumble to the more unusual alphabet soup, quotefall, flat tire, and concatenation.

After you finish each puzzle, a different member of the Mallard family gives a few biting details of their trip, which quickly turns into a major-league nightmare. A souvenir is also purchased at each destination. These 100 souvenirs — an invisible dog leash, a voodoo mask, a rubber rat, giant wax lips, an inflatable palm tree, and the rest — form the final puzzle in the game, a complicated jigsaw featuring highlights from the vacation.

Are We There Yet? is one of those puzzle games that's both frustrating and rewarding. The design team's previous collaboration, *The Fool's Errand*, had the same structure, but the puzzles in that game weren't as involved. In *Are We There Yet?*, you can easily struggle with a magic square or a word jumble for an hour or more before solving it, only to be faced with *another* puzzle at the same destination.

While this certainly separates the dedicated from the casual puzzle solver, it also made it necessary for Electronic Arts to package a solution book with the game. This isn't a *clue* book — it actually gives the answers to every puzzle. Granted, the solution book saves you considerable hair-pulling when you've become hopelessly stumped, and makes it unnecessary to spend hours trying to solve the types of puzzles that you don't enjoy.

Each time you leave a destination, you pick up a souvenir. When you have all 100, turn over the pieces to begin work on the game's final puzzle.

On the other hand, chances are that you'll reach for the solution book instead of sticking with a complicated puzzle. And if that happens, you not only lose the thrill of solving a tough puzzle, but you also turn a game that should be played over a period of weeks into a game you can finish in a day or two.

Take our advice and hand over the solution book to a trusted friend or relative — one who agrees to give you the answer only when you're at your wit's end. That's the best way to play *Are We There Yet?*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, or EGA graphics; supports Ad Lib and Roland sound boards; mouse recommended.

EVERYONE KNOWS BUT INDY. AND HE'D BETTER LEARN FAST.

Plato knew about Atlantis.
In a lost dialogue he wrote about the famed city and orichalcum, the mysterious element that powered the Atlantean's amazing machinery.

The Nazis know about Atlantis.
They tracked down the lost dialogue, and realized orichalcum would yield them the ultimate weapon of the age.

Sophia knows about Atlantis.
She unearthed a mysterious necklace and beads of orichalcum during an Icelandic archeological dig with Indy. Their magical properties made her a psychic.

Everyone knows but Indy.
And he's got to learn fast. The Nazis are one step ahead of him—from Iceland to North Africa to the Azores to... Atlantis.

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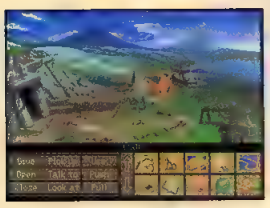
INDIANA JONES™ and the FATE of ATLANTIS



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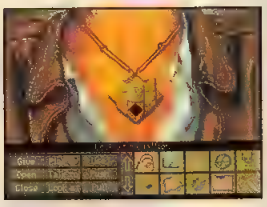
Indy and Sophia cross many paths on the way to rediscovering the lost continent.



The ancient necklace hides many mysteries from the past.

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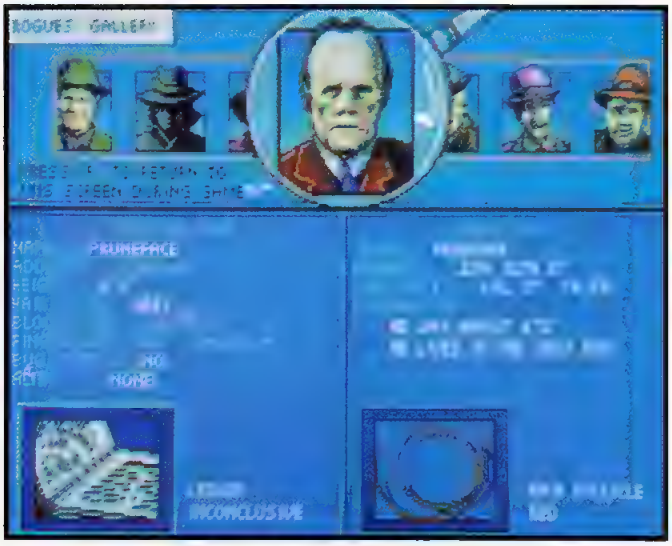
DICK TRACY

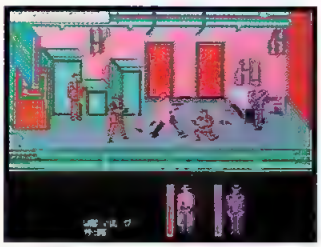
LANCE ELKO



The Rogues' Gallery, which you can access back at headquarters, lets you match clues to each criminal's rap sheet.

If you're an avid fan of this legendary comic-strip hero, you'll probably like this game. All of the essential story components are here, including all of the characters made famous by the comic strip and the movie.

Subtitled *The Crime Solving Adventure*, this **Disney Software** game is basically a blend of deductive work and arcade action. In the course of your criminal investigations, you must hop in your squad car and drive around the city (which is fairly large) to find and examine the scene of the crime, stake out criminal hideouts, and stop suspects for interrogation. You can't be overly aggressive in your pursuit of justice — if you press suspects too hard, expect a face full of lead and a long hospital stay; arrest the wrong guys, and be prepared for a demotion.



While Tracy *is basically a game of deduction, there's a hefty dose of arcade action. Be prepared to run, jump, and shoot.*

Don't be too aggressive in your driving, either. No matter how good your driving skills, you're sure to run over pedestrians, as well as crash into lots of cars. Too much of this vehicular mayhem, however, means trips to the garage for repairs, which translates into less time for solving the case at hand.

The designers have done a nice job in capturing the flavor of Tracy's world, especially for those with Disney's Sound Source. The voices and lines of the characters — from "Can it, gumshoe, you don't scare me none" to "You holding back, buster? Spill the beans!" — are delivered in a style straight from a 1930s radio drama. Without a Sound Source, though, much of the game's flavor and wisecracking humor is lost.

The game's nicest touches, and some of the funniest, are in the sound. Big band music plays as Tracy enters the Club Ritz. As he moves deeper into the club, past tables where patrons are smoking, you hear the sounds of hacking and coughing. And when he reaches the dressing room of Breathless Mahoney, you hear the voice of a very sexy siren. When he exits her room, it's a sure bet for first-time players that he'll run into a potted plant and let loose with a painful "uuugghh!" In fact, until you're used to the game, expect to ram Tracy into doors, boxes, and fire hydrants —accompanied each time with the requisite grunt.

While *Dick Tracy* scores fairly high in charm (great sound, decent graphics, and nice little arcade interludes with humorous touches), it gets a considerably lower grade in playability. The game's individual ingredients are nicely executed—from clue gathering and interrogation to car chases and gunfights — but after playing a time or two, you'll find the game getting stale. Seasoned game players will become bored once they realize the only thing that separates one game from another are the variables (criminal, crime, place, and time). The process becomes repetitious, tedious, and overdone rather quickly.

On the other hand, younger players and die-hard Tracy fans might be far more tolerant. When augmented with a Sound Source, the game environment should be heaven for those infatuated with Tracy and the almost surreal cast of characters that populate his world.

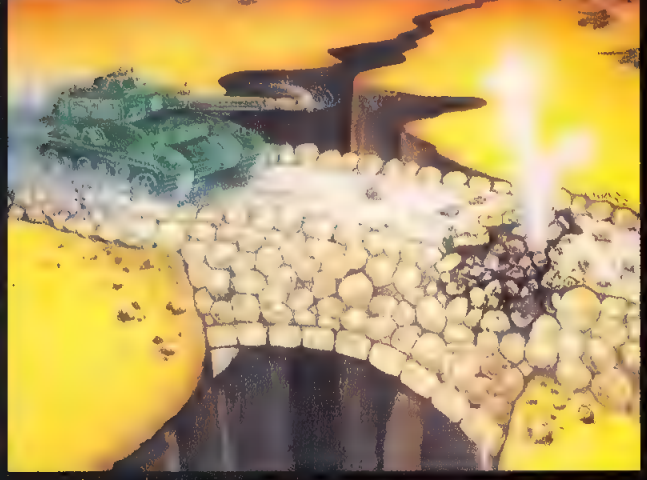
It's too bad for Disney Software that *Dick Tracy* didn't arrive last year, closer to the release of the movie. It's a bit ironic, too, that the game suffers from the same problem as the movie: looks good, sounds good — but falls short in substance.

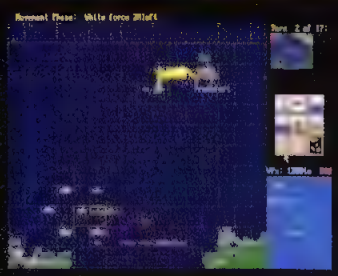
GP

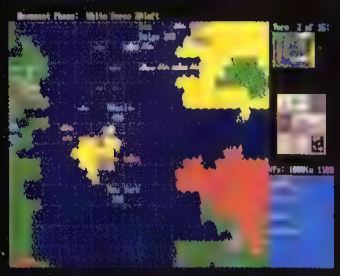
Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; minimum 10 MHz clock-speed and hard drive recommended; VGA, EGA, or Tandy graphics; supports joystick; supports Sound Source.

The Lost Admiral

The Perfect General

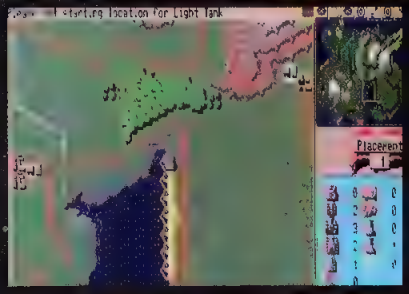


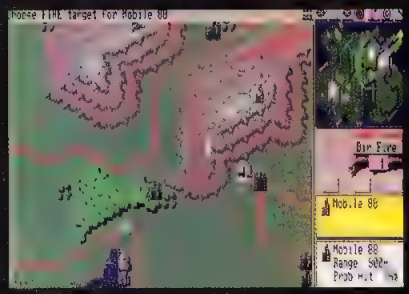




QQP

Quantum Quality Productions, Inc.





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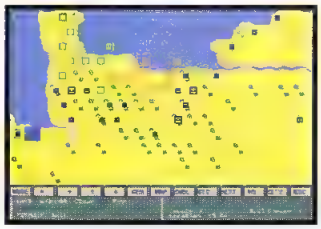
WESTERN FRONT

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Italy's mountainous terrain favors a tenacious German defense.

About a year and a half ago, **SSI** released *Second Front*, generally hailed as the most satisfying WWII Russian Front war game yet released for the PC format. Now SSI and designer Gary Grigsby have produced a companion game, *Western Front*, which re-creates the epic struggle for continental Europe, from just before D-Day to the final convulsions of the Third Reich.

Players who fell under the spell of *Second Front* will know what to expect here: the game map (a huge one, covering everything from the coast of England to Berlin and south almost to the tip of the Italian "boot") is based on a transparent hexagonal grid scaled at 10 miles per hex. Each turn represents four days of real time, and the action is set at the divisional/corps level—although, as in *Second Front*, you can choose to see battle results



German panzers are poised for a counterattack on Normandy's beachhead.

down to the battalion level, including the num-ber of individual tanks, squads, and gun tubes that were destroyed in each engagement.

You can con-trol everything a real general could control, and must suffer from the vagaries of factors a real general would *like* to control: weather, supply problems, and political interference. There are three self-contained scenarios: the Battle for Italy, the Battle of the Bulge, and Operation Cobra, the breakout from Normandy.

If you're in the mood for an epic campaign, you can opt for the Overlord scenario, which lets you refight *everything*, from just-before D-Day to the end...but be prepared to invest around 100 hours for a complete game.

Western Front is in every way a worthy successor to *Second Front*. The only problem is that *Western Front* isn't as much fun, for reasons having nothing to do with the game design per se. In any of the three single-campaign set-ups, the odds against the Germans are so overwhelming that the outcome is never in doubt — exactly the opposite of what made the Russian campaigns in *Second Front* so riveting.

If you want to make a really interesting contest of it, however, do this: select the Overlord campaign, adjust the parameters to "help Axis" and take the German side. Retool your factories *immediately* to churn out Me-262 jets, King Tigers, and other "super weapons," crank up the German replacement levels to 100 percent...and you'll at least give the Allies a real contest. You're not really fudging history here — you're simply putting the Third Reich on a "total war" footing, something that could have been done in real life, but wasn't until it was too late to have a real effect.

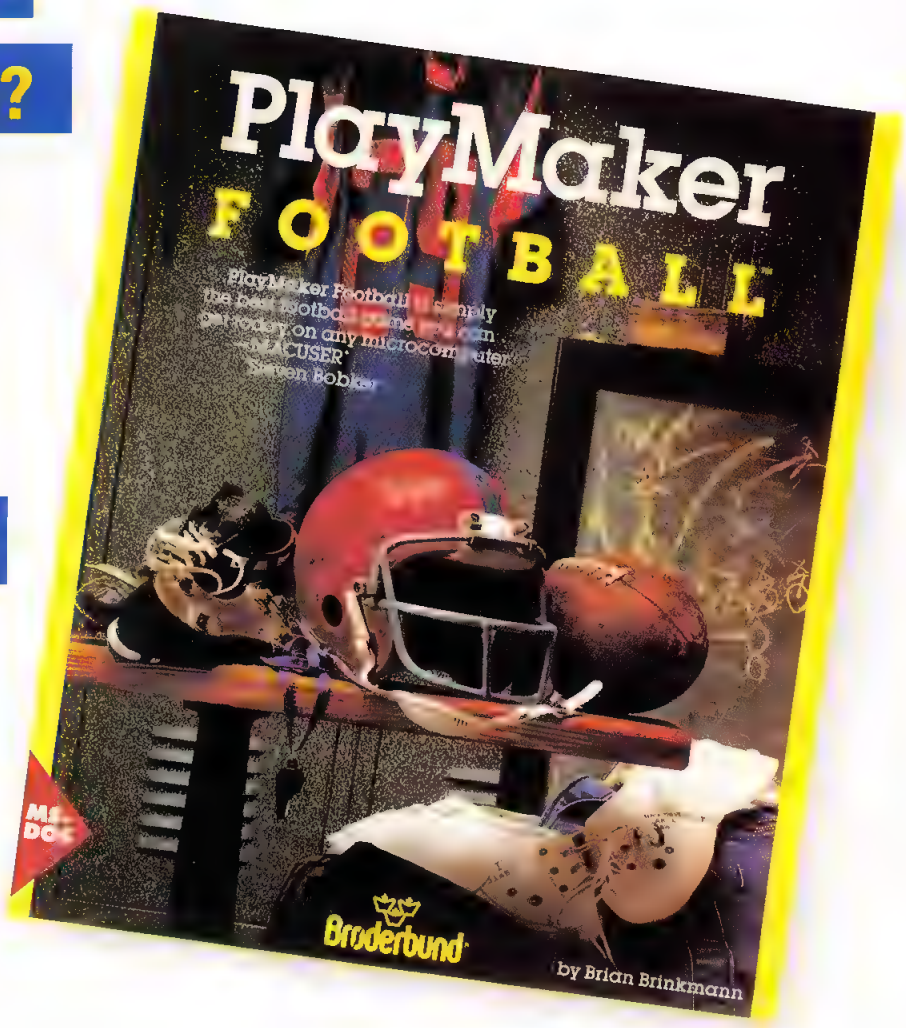
One word of caution: the box copy advises that this is an "advanced" war game, a description that's certainly accurate. This simulation was designed by and for hardcore gamers who are comfortable with arcane force-modifier formulas, and user-friendly English is not a high priority for those who wrote the manual. There are some sophisticated command and control procedures which the German commander *must* master in order to maximize his chances, but don't expect much help from the documentation — these guys hail from the "real-men-don't-need-tutorials" school of game design.

For game players who have a special interest in this aspect of World War II, *Western Front* is a must-have program. Most of its scenarios are so lopsided, though, that game players looking for high drama would do better to first acquire *Second Front* — it's marginally easier to master, and the odds are much more even between the two sides.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; supports mouse.

YOU WANNA PLAY GAMES? OR YOU WANNA PLAY FOOTBALL?



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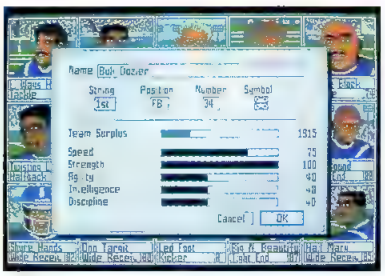

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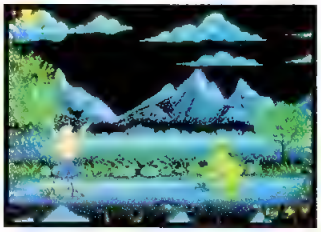
WRATH OF THE DEMON

RUSS CECCOLA

Action games are a dime a dozen. So what makes one stand out from the rest of the crowd? Three things—creative design, attractive presentation, and a healthy dose of fun. *Wrath of the Demon*, from **ReadySoft**, excels in all three areas. *Wrath* features a blend of action game styles, has superb graphics, sports a large variety of monsters, and offers music composed by one of the game industry's maestros.

The story behind *Wrath of the Demon* is one of classic fantasy. A demon has taken over the land and captured the good fairy who protected the people. You — a would-be hero, of course — play the role of a stereotypical muscleman barbarian character whose mission is to find the demon and kill him. As an incentive, King Luther has promised you the hand of his daughter in marriage if you succeed.

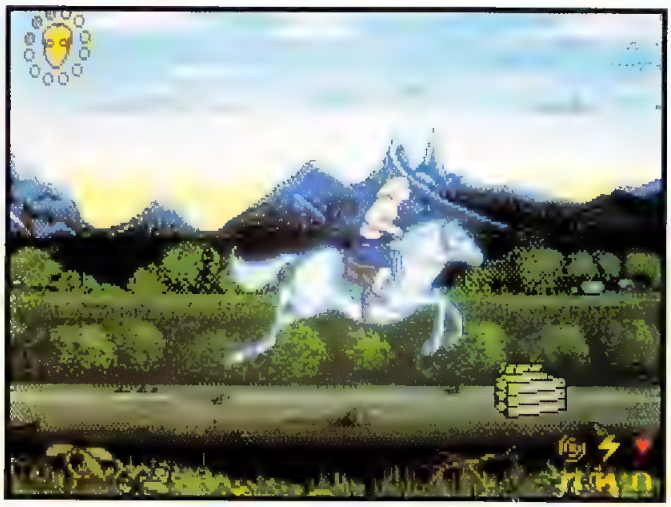
After watching the game introductory screens, get ready for a lot of fun. Unlike many action games, *Wrath* offers a tremendous variety of game play. It incorporates several different mini-games, each with its own surprise. (It's best to play *Wrath* with a joystick. In fact, some sequences might be downright impossible to finish without one.)



This troll is small, but can dish out a lot of punishment. Avoid the knives and stones his companion hurls at you.

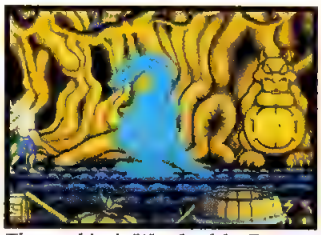
The first action sequence in the game is one of the toughest. You ride a horse down a road full of high obstacles (flying monsters) and low obstacles (rocks and boxes). As your horse gallops along, you must duck or punch the monsters, jump over the road debris, and pick up potions. Subsequent action sequences pit you against monsters in one-on-one battle scenes or send you on other side-scrolling adventures. Each action portion of the game has a unique flavor, which keeps your interest high throughout play.

In order to succeed, you need to collect three kinds of potions. In the game's first action sequence, you must kill certain monsters and then pick up the potions from your position atop your steed. Each potion has a unique power — and you must save each one until you really need it. Shield potions make you invincible for three seconds; zap potions kill some monsters and weaken others, and healing potions restore you to full health.



The opening sequence is one of the toughest in the game.

The graphics in *Wrath of the Demon* are gorgeous. Backgrounds offer great detail, and parallax scrolling supports the illusion of depth on certain screens. Some of the monsters are as large as half the screen. Despite all of this size and background activity, animation is very smooth and quick. In fact, some designers should use this game as a yardstick against which to measure graphics work for future action games.



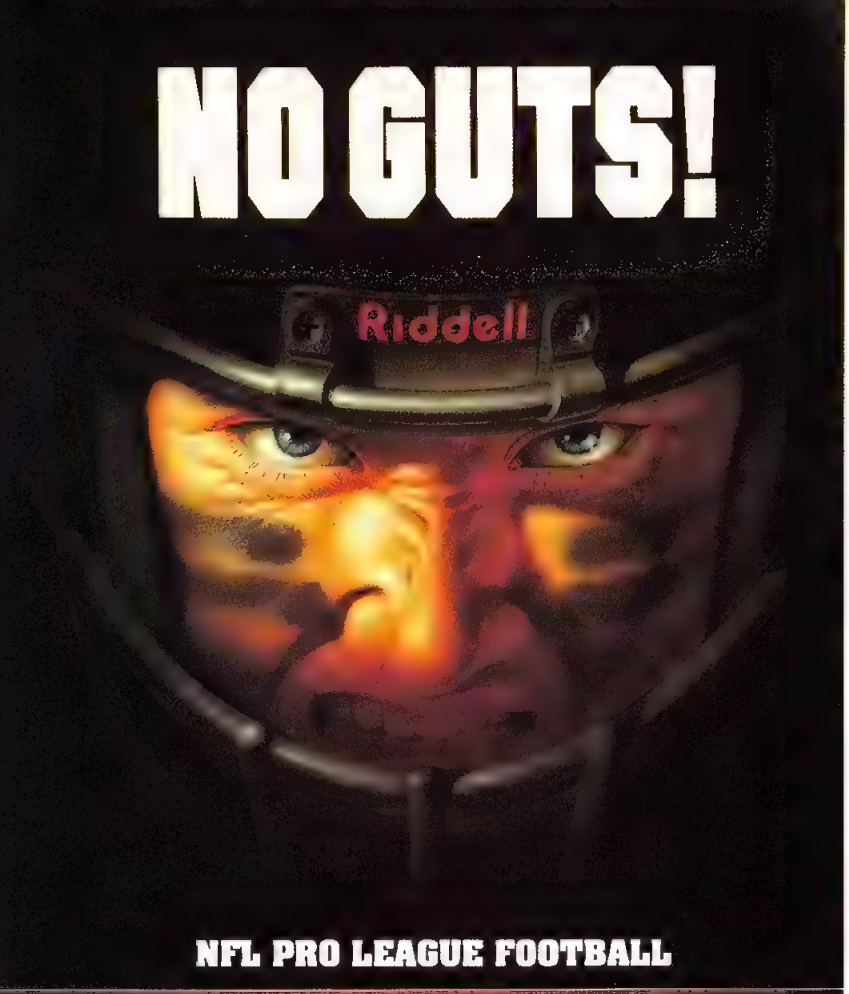
The graphics in Wrath of the Demon *are outstanding.*

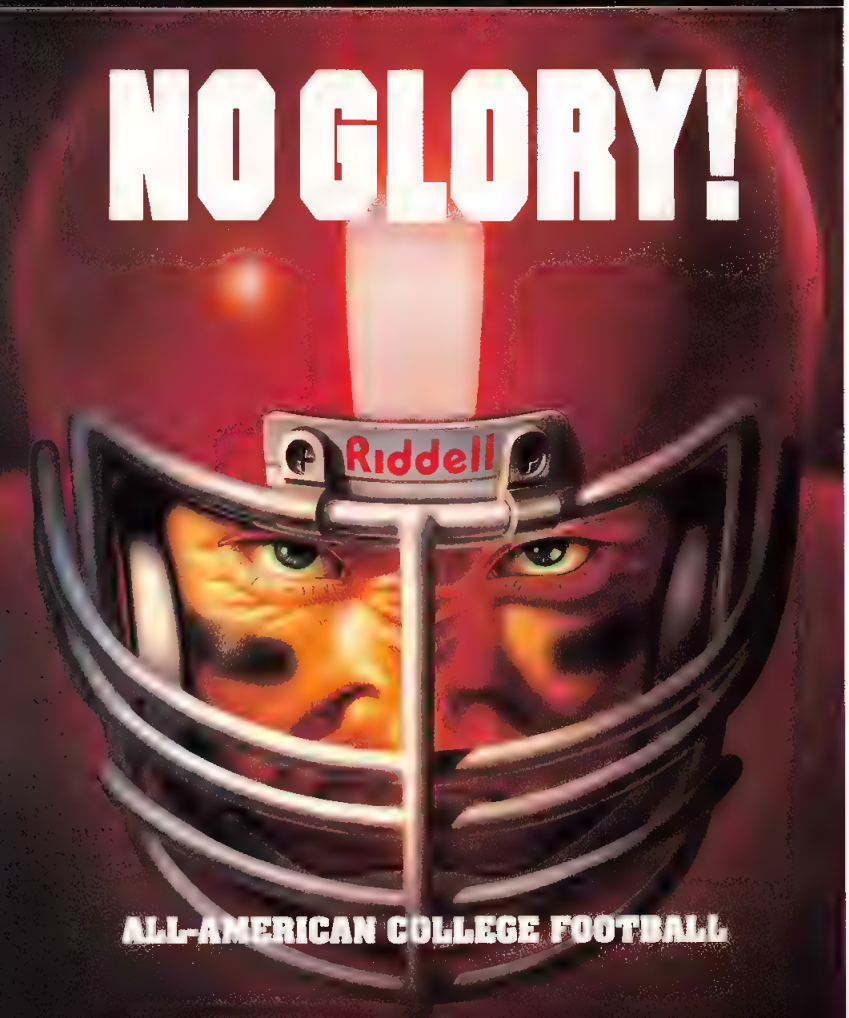
The game's music, written by ace composer David Whittaker, does an excellent job in creating tension and excitement, using a variety of themes. Sound effects are also strewn liberally throughout the game. Various grunts and swooshes bring the monsters and the land to life.

Wrath of the Demon is a rich game, one you'll enjoy playing again even after you've won. Combine superior play qualities with outstanding graphics, animation, sound, and music, and there's no question that *Wrath of the Demon* is a hands-down winner.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory required; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy graphics; joystick recommended.





From league play, to head to head, to historical replays NFL Pro League Football features endless strategy, unrivaled graphics, an abundance of statistics, in a game so real, USA TODAY has used it to project the last 4 Super Bowls!

NFL Pro League Football features: Weather conditions, 2 billion play combinations, a league play feature that allows a coach not to be present to play, stats compiling, and 5 seasons of NFL teams (with player names and statistics). And just look at these print out options: Post Game Stats, Play by Play, League Standings, Season Stats and League Leaders, to name just a few!

NFL Pro League Football is available for IBM or Compatible Computers with EGA or VGA Graphics. Printer is optional.

New graphics featuring NFL Teams and official uniforms.

MICRO SPORTS

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ALL USA ORDERS SHIPPED UPS 2ND DAY AIR.

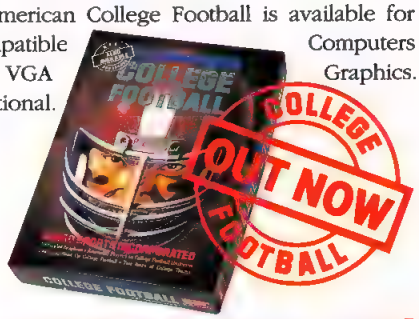
All-American College Football has more features that any other college football game ever designed. Coach your favourite team, over 50 schools represented. Additional teams are available on request. See if you can win your conference, or, better yet, see if you have what it takes to win the National Championship...

All-American College Football allows for League play, Head Up play (Computer or Human), Computer vs Computer and True Modem play.

Head Up play features animated players in their college uniforms, home and away jerseys.

All-American College Football also includes: Stats Keeper for maintaining Conference Standings, a Record Book, Season Stats, Conference Leaders, National Rankings plus much much more!

All-American College Football is available for IBM or Compatible Computers with EGA or VGA Graphics. Printer is optional.



MICRO SPORTS

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4D BOXING

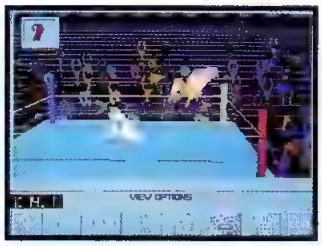
STEPHEN POOLE

Adjust the camera until you find the viewpoint you like best.

There was a time not too long ago when you could watch a title fight, free of charge, right in the comfort of your living room. But those days are long gone, replaced by pay-per-view matches that almost always fail to live up to the hype which precedes them. So what's a boxing fan to do?

If you own a PC, the answer is simple — go out and pick up a copy of *4D Boxing* from **Electronic Arts**. No other boxing simulation, regardless of game system, offers the kind of action you'll find here. In fact, you've probably never seen a sports simulation *of any kind* that's as intense and realistic as *4D Boxing*. Until a very impressive contender comes along, *4D Boxing* is unquestionably the king of boxing games.

What makes *4D Boxing* so outstanding is an animation process called Tru-Motion. A live boxer was videotaped performing all the essential boxing moves — bobbing, jabbing, weaving, punching, and so on — then the movements were duplicated using a stick figure. Polygon graphics, long popular in flight simulators for the smooth animation they make possible, were hung over the "bare bones" of the boxer. The result is animation that's stunningly fluid and lifelike.



If you're unlucky enough to suffer a knockdown, your opponent will celebrate with some fancy acrobatics.

Of course, you can't expect a fighter with a cubical head, trapezoidal trunk, and rectangular legs to look like even the most battle-scarred human boxer. The combatants here resemble nothing so much as a cross between Gumby and a Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robot. But most boxing fans don't fret over a fighter's appearance anyway, and the realistic movement is more than enough to help you completely suspend your sense of disbelief.

Whether you use a joystick or the numeric keypad to control your boxer, the logical interface means you'll have the basic punches and moves down in a few minutes. Picture the numeric keypad superimposed over your opponent, and you'll get a pretty good idea of what number to press or where to move the joystick to land the right blow. There's even an assortment of "showoff" moves for taunting your foe or celebrating a victory.

To be honest, the animation in *4D Boxing* is a bit slow on a 286 computer. But an option to progressively "trim" your fighter down to the original stick figure helps speed things up, and watching the stick-figures do battle is just as engrossing as watching the fully detailed characters.

The animation alone is enough to recommend *4D Boxing*, but there's a lot more to this package. In *4D Boxing*, you don't just control a boxer — you create and train him, too. You determine the height, weight, appearance, and even clothing for your contender. Once that's done, you can fight a few exhibition matches, or start climbing the ladder that leads to a championship bout.

Here again, *4D Boxing* succeeds in convincing you of the illusion — you'll find yourself watching your win-loss record with increasing interest, even to the point where you guiltily reboot your computer to avoid a blemish on a perfect record.

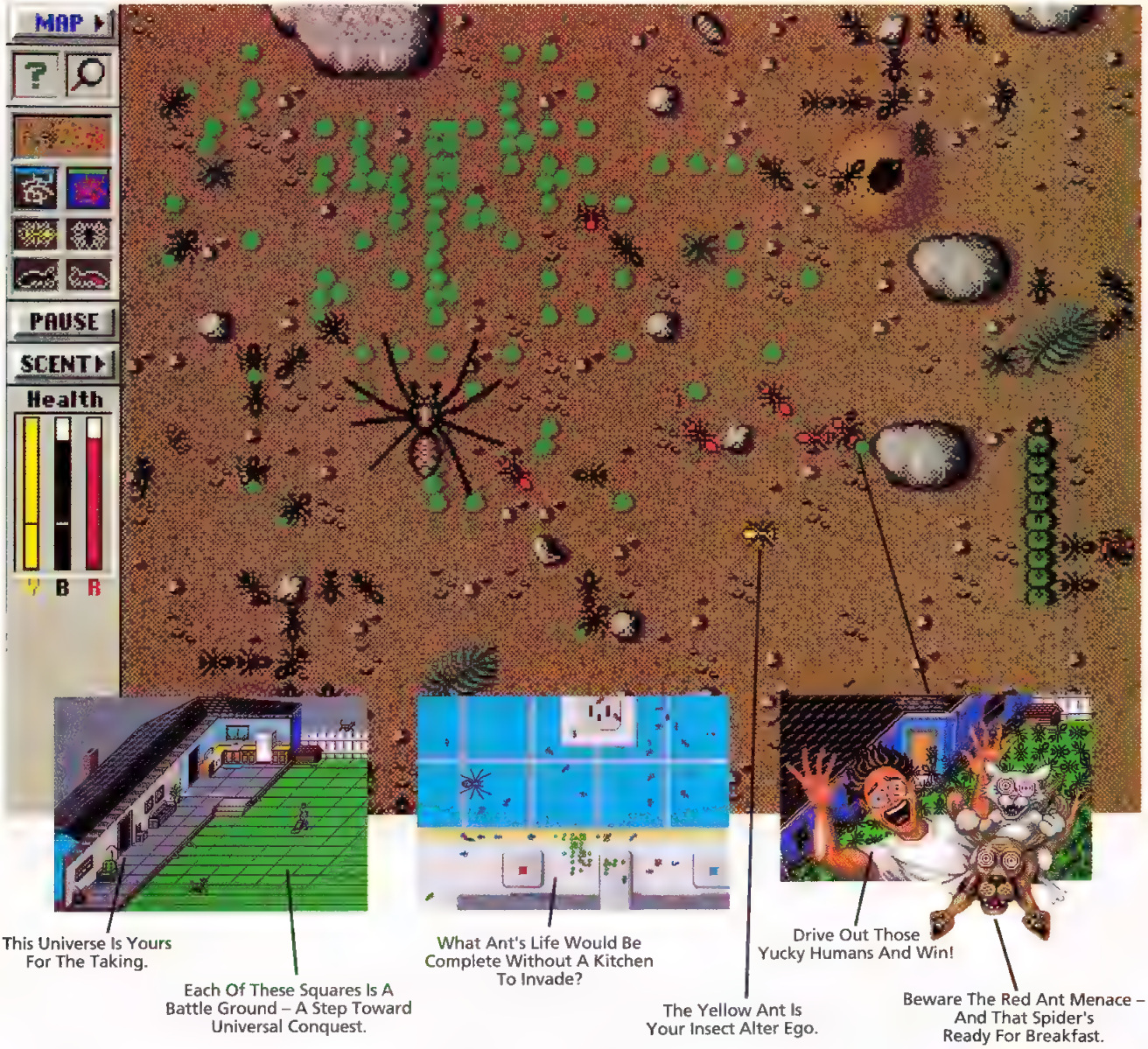
Last but not least is the VCR feature. Thanks to a wide assortment of controls and camera angles, you have access to an amazing number of viewpoints, both during and after a given round (you can only review the last round you fought). And you can see a closeup, first-person view from either boxer's perspective — great for when you're about to cold-cock a stunned opponent.

There's no split decision on this one. *4D Boxing* is a champ through and through.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy graphics; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Roland MT-32, and Tandy sound boards; supports joystick.

Walk An Inch In My Shoes



This Universe Is Yours For The Taking.

Each Of These Squares Is A Battle Ground – A Step Toward Universal Conquest.

What Ant's Life Would Be Complete Without A Kitchen To Invade?

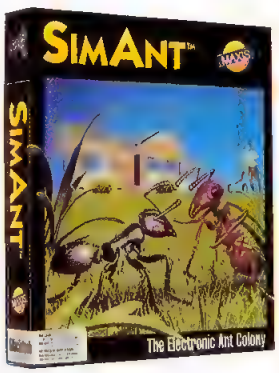
The Yellow Ant Is Your Insect Alter Ego.

Drive Out Those Yucky Humans And Win!

Beware The Red Ant Menace – And That Spider's Ready For Breakfast.

I'm an ant. You've stepped on me, poisoned me, cursed me—even held a magnifying glass over me. But do you know what it's like to be me?

SIMANT™ The Electronic Ant Colony puts you in my place. This new game from the creators of SimCity® and SimEarth™ lets you experience life as an ant. Fight for queen and colony. Face hungry spiders and menacing hordes of enemy ants. Endure abuse from those merciless humans. So easy to play even a human can do it — but, based on real ant biology and behavior, **SimAnt** has the depth of play and serious gaming challenge to really drive you buggy. So, before you step on another ant, walk an inch in my shoes. All six of them. SimAnt is available now at your favorite software retailer,or call MAXIS direct at **1-800-33-MAXIS.**



MAXIS

Macintosh and VGA screens shown. Available for Macintosh. DOS version available soon. SimAnt, SimCity and SimEarth are trademarks of MAXIS. ©1991, MAXIS. All rights reserved worldwide. And then some. GPS192

HEADLINE HARRY AND THE GREAT PAPER RACE

LESLIE EISER

Any budding newspaper journalists with a yen for travel at your house? Word is out that Headline Harry, the editor over at *The Daily Star*, is looking for a few good reporters.

He'll pay you to travel to famous American cities and collect information about interesting historical events like Barnie Clark's heart transplant or the first man on the moon. But you'll have to keep away from those fiends at *The Diabolical Daily*. They'll try every trick in the book to throw you off track.

Join the staff at *The Daily Star* by showing up in Harry's office. He'll briefly describe the topic of a story he thinks will be important, and give you a bit of traveling advice. Don't be surprised if he recommends a diet of fried chicken or suggests a visit to the Equality State. Just figure out the location he's referring to and get going.

Taxi drivers in each city you visit offer to take you to several local hangouts, including a selection of popular bars, street corners, and meeting rooms. Interview everybody you meet, and press every button you see. You never know where an important fact might be hidden. Pay careful attention to the casual conversation of the cab drivers—sometimes their off-the-cuff remarks are hints pointing to your next destination. Once you've figured out your next destination, it's back to the airport for another plane ride.

Oops, Harry informs you that those sleazy reporters over at The Diabolical Daily *have beaten you to the punch on this one.*

There are 12 adventures in **Davidson's** *Headline Harry and The Great Paper Chase*, each containing over 100 pieces of information on three interwoven stories. These stories all take place in the same physical location, but in different years. References to interesting events unrelated to these story lines provide hints to help you identify the time frame of the headline story. Assemble the facts that fit that story by jotting everything down in your computerized notebook, then pick out the critical pieces of information.

For each adventure, you'll have to indicate an exact date, the names of key people involved, and a list of key words. File your story before time runs out and you'll have completed that adventure successfully. Do it 12 times, and you'll be the top reporter at *The Daily Star*.

Headline Harry is a feast for the eyes and ears. Landmarks like the Golden Gate Bridge and the Statue of Liberty appear in windows and through doors. There's an interesting musical score, nice sound effects, and occasional digitized speech (clearly audible on a PC's internal speaker if the machine is running at 10 MHz or faster). And the icon-driven interface is attractive and easy to use.

If you play each adventure only once, *Headline Harry* is highly entertaining and educational. If you try to play them again, you'll discover the game's only problem. Each adventure is exactly the same each time it's played, from the main story line to the pictures, sound effects, hints, and lost objects. Players used to the variety of many other programs will be disappointed in the game's predictability.

Nevertheless, *Headline Harry and The Great Paper Chase* is an entertaining educational game. It would be impossible to finish all 12 adventures and not learn quite a bit about U.S. geography and modern (1950-1990) U.S. history.

GP

Enjoy the sights in Washington, D.C., but don't forget to ask questions and listen to the radio. Fast-breaking news happens all the time.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory (for Tandy, 256-color VGA, or MCGA graphics), 512K minimum memory (for EGA, CGA, Hercules, and 16-color VGA graphics); hard drive required; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, Tandy sound devices, and PS/1 audio card; supports mouse.

Build An Empire To Stand The Test Of Time

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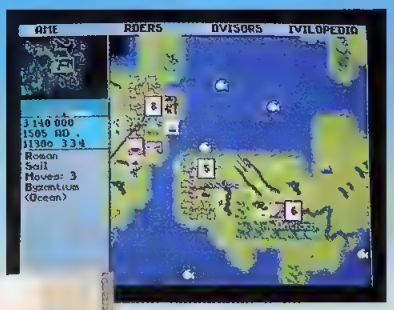
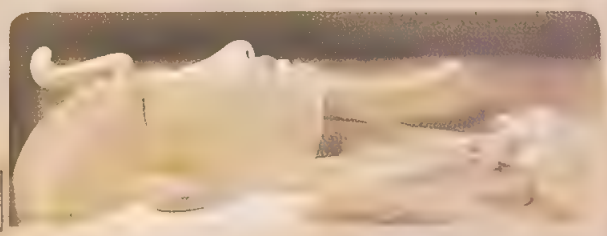
We note that your primitive civilization has not achieved Bronze Working.
Perhaps you would care to exchange knowledge with us?
• Buzz off
• OK



Look for an F-117A Stealth Fighter Demo in specially marked packages of TDK Micro Floppy Disks.
TDK.



Rout Ramses... Outwit Alexander... Knockout Napoleon... History is littered with the bones of great men who thought their achievements would live forever. Now you can succeed where they failed as MicroProse brings you Sid Meier's **Civilization.** Guide a culture from its earliest stages, through agricultural and industrial revolutions, all the way to your own Space Age. Survive and dominate by outmaneuvering mankind's most legendary leaders. Carve your name indelibly in the pages of history. With Sid Meier's **Civilization,** you really can build a brave new world.

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For IBM-PC/Tandy/Compatibles. For the latest information on release dates and availabilities call MicroProse Customer Service at 301-771-1151, 9 am to 5 pm EST, weekdays. ©1991 MicroProse Software, Inc., 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030.

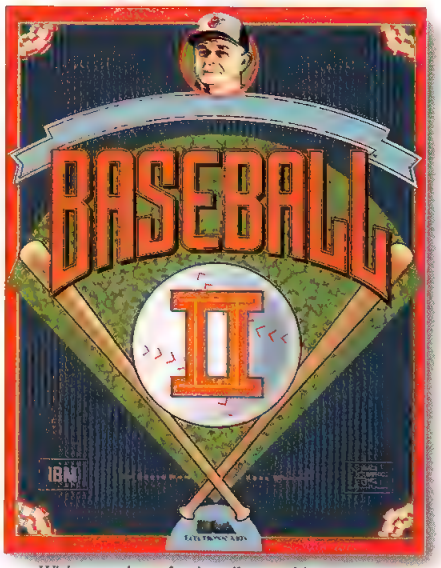
BASEBALL'S MOST AMAZING TRIPLE PLAY.

You've never played anything like this before The genuine article. A game bursting at the seams with all the dimensions of baseball itself.

Earl Weaver Baseball II™ by Mirage Graphics. The new version of the baseball standard that's a major advance in the game. With improved graphics and far more stats than ever before.

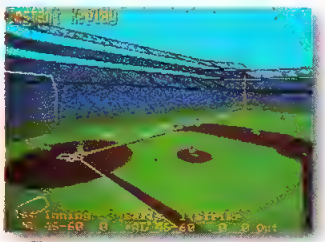
In fact, Weaver II is the first game system ever to combine stunning animated baseball action with actual Major League stats. Producing what definitely is the Holy Grail of the diamond set.

Just ask *Fantasy Baseball Magazine:* "Fantasy and computer baseball fans have been searching for one game that has it all — Weaver II is it; it will appeal to the fantasy-baseball fanatic as well as avid arcade gamers."



With actual, professionally rated big league managers, you experience every rich detail and subtle wrinkle of the game.

All the 1990 players and profiles on every manager based on 60 individual ratings. Updated annually.



Talk about taking you out to the ballpark. Weaver II comes with all 26 stadiums plus historical landmarks like the Polo Grounds and even some outrageous fictional parks.

Finally, a Game that Covers All the Bases.

Weaver II is simply a more animated game of baseball. Over 100,000 frames of animation. Giving you something we call perfect baseball physics. Instead of bush league canned sequences.

Which means a nubber off the end of the bat will crawl down the third baseline. Just like real life. Balls bounce differently from grass to turf, from park to park.

We have every one of the 26 current ballparks, famous historic parks, even six fantasy ones. And every diamond's a gem. With real dimensions, real characteristics.

©1991 MLBPA

So you can conquer the Green Monster. Get blown away by Candlestick's winds. Steal home in the home of the Bronx Bombers. With unlimited camera views, instant replay, and support for 256-color MCGA/VGA graphics, you get better coverage than any network.

Make Stats Come Alive.

Weaver II adds up to the best baseball system ever for yet another reason. We play baseball completely by the numbers. All the 1990 stats for every Major League player.

You can download current player stats updated weekly. Accumulate, edit, and print player stats for virtually any category. Or save boxscores.

Now you can be baseball's Big Cheese. Set up leagues, draft players, even build your own stadium.

Play against the top dogs in the game: Jose, Kirby, Darryl, Boggs, Gwynn, Brett and all the rest.

Every hitter/fielder also comes with 50 stats and ratings. Every pitcher, 30 stats and ratings. Including finer points like flyball/groundball ratios for batters and pitchers and player durability.

Nobody offers this combination of ratings, flexibility, and sheer number of sorted lists. And while this certainly enriches the action aspect of Weaver II, the game is equally engrossing playing with stats only. Generate and then autoplay schedules with multiple line-ups and pitching rotations. Or play a game in under a minute in superfast simulation.

Of course, this game also comes with one of baseball's most prized characters: Earl Weaver. One of the winningest managers ever to kick dirt all over an umpire (owner of two Series rings, but you knew that already).

Play on Earl's team. Manage against him. You get profiles on every manager based on 60 individual ratings. Including frequency of calling bunts, steals, hit and run, and pinch hitters.

You can even ask Earl for advice anytime. As you'd expect, he's got an answer for just about any situation.

Run the Whole Show.

Some people aren't satisfied with just being a manager. That's what our Commissioner's Disk II™ is for.

It's the perfect thing to heat up fantasy leagues.

From your full screen batting perspective, you can see every seam of a pitched ball. Except if it's a Nolan Ryan heater. The unbeatable pitching includes 9 different pitches to 18 locations.

With it, you can even draft leagues, manage 40-men rosters, track salaries, hire free agents.

The Commissioner's Disk II also lets you build your own ballpark. Right down to the foul area, playing surface, weather, and seating.

Our Manager Construction Set, part of the Commissioner's Disk II, allows you to replace Earl. By using manager profiles from last year's teams or building your own manager profiles.

Put it all together — Earl Weaver Baseball II, the MLBPA® Player Statistics and Manager Profiles,™ and the Commissioner's Disk II — and you get baseball's most amazing triple play. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that this new system is already a tremendous hit with everyone including the baseball press.

If you want the baseball system that's been called "the next best thing to box seats," call 1 (800) 245-4525 to order. Or visit your local computer dealer.

And if you don't think Weaver II is the spitting image of baseball, we'll be more than happy to send you your wad back.

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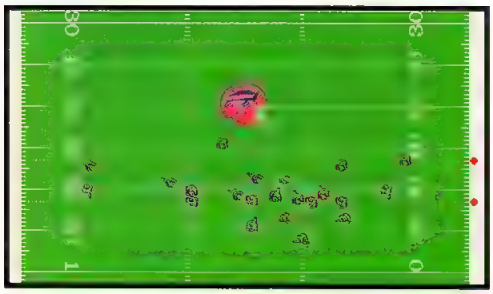
ELECTRONIC ARTS®

NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL

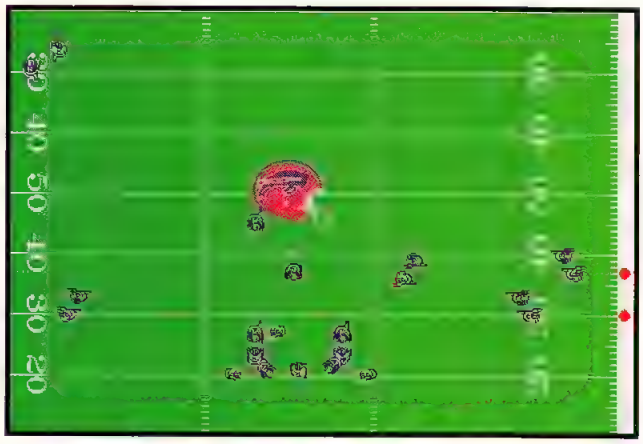
NEIL RANDALL

This isn't a new game; in fact, *NFL Pro League Football* by **Micro Sports** has been around in various forms for quite some time. But the 1991 version is new enough, distributed by a major software firm (Interplay) and including improved graphics along with stats for the 1986-1990 NFL seasons.

In many ways, *Pro League* shows its age. At this point in the evolution of PC games, players expect certain things—like full animation, mouse and joystick support, rich arcade-style options, and thick, informative manuals. *Pro League* offers adequate graphics but only mediocre animation (in fact, watching plays develop is often confusing), and mice and joysticks need not apply. Nor, for that matter, is there any place here for the hands-on arcade fan. And the manual is sparse indeed.



Playing in the Heads-Up Football mode, the Bills defend against a Giants' sweep to the right. You can select from a total of 198 offensive and defensive plays.



At the top left, the Giants' receiver catches a pass. The Bills gambled by choosing a strong defense against the run.

Even so, *Pro League* has much to recommend it. Above all, it's a strong statistical game—in fact, everything else about it exists solely to support the statistical focus. The game also excels in its multi-player league capabilities. You can play against a friend or the computer in a mode called Heads-Up Football. Here, you select a play (198 choices are available, 99 on both offense and defense) through an initially confusing but ultimately effective method that requires typing two numbers found on a playbook card. And you can download weekly NFL stats from the USA Today Sports Center in order to keep your teams up to date.

But the Heads-Up mode pales beside the Pro League Football mode, which pits your coaching strategy against as many as 27 other people. It works like this. The owner of the game prints out game plan sheets, then gives a pack of them to each participating coach (the computer will manage as many as teams as you want in case you don't have 27 reliable friends). Each player selects one team to coach, then fills in a game plan sheet for each game on the schedule. You can also print detailed scouting reports which, like the game plans, can be given to the various coaches.

The sheet asks you for a set of percentages. For example, on first and ten, will you run the ball 70% of the time, pass 85% of the time, or some other variation? What about first and 20? Third and between two and seven? What percentage of carries will the halfback handle? The fullback? Quarterback? Intended receivers must also be given percentages, and you must decide when you'll pass to the wide side or short side. You also make calls for defensive plays in a similar fashion.

Enter all the data for all the teams, and the computer plays out 16 weeks of games. After you complete the season, you're hopefully headed to the playoffs. You can set weather and other game conditions if you want, or have the computer do it for you. The project takes planning and commitment, but the rewards are great.

So if you're looking for an action-oriented football game that looks like what you see on TV, *NFL Pro League Football* isn't for you. But if you want realistic results and a fascinating multi-player coaching game, it's superb. Add optionally available team disks from the '60s and '70s, and the ability to trade and draft, and you have a full NFL simulation. Now, if there was only a way to design your own touchdown dance....

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; hard drive required; VGA or EGA graphics; supports modem play.

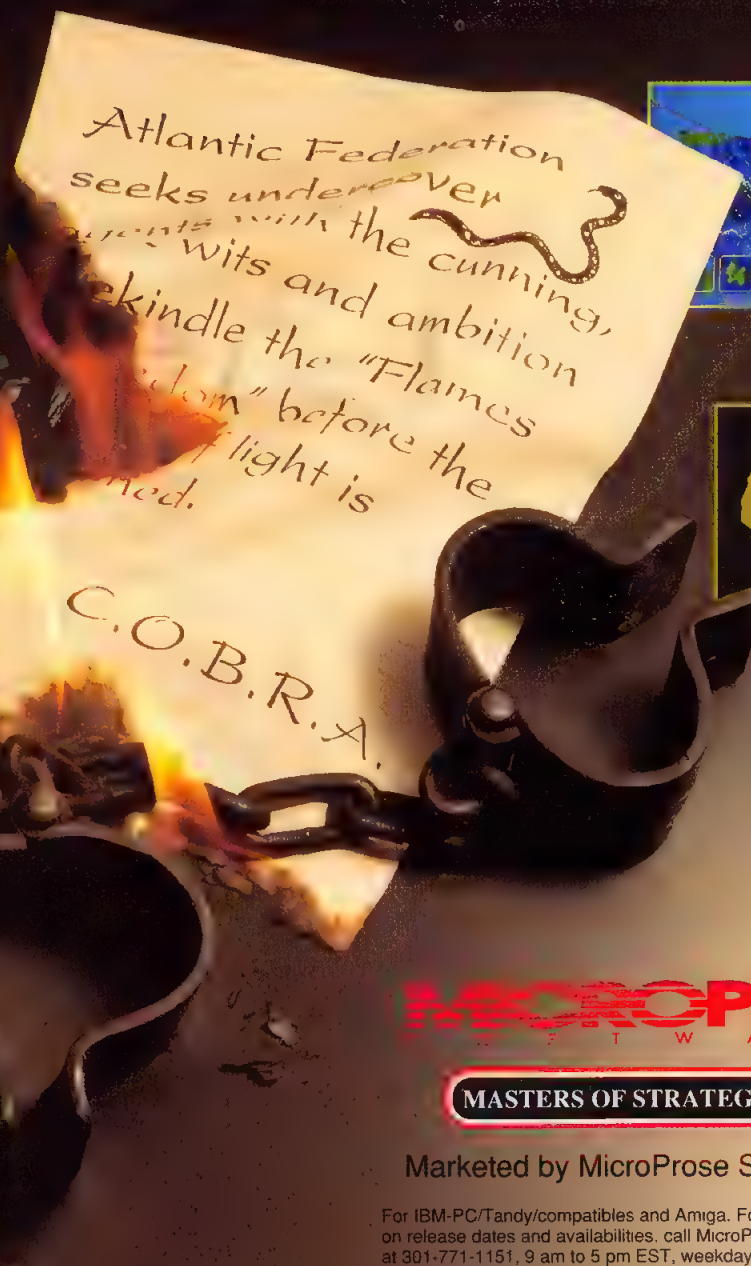
FLAMES OF FREEDOM™

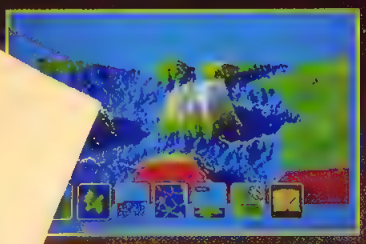
A new Ice Age ravaged the world, toppling traditional governments and destroying law and order. When the ice finally melted, the survivors found another, more ruthless menace: the Saharan Empire, a brutal, totalitarian regime determined to control and manipulate everything in its path; an empire so powerful it can only be defeated from within.

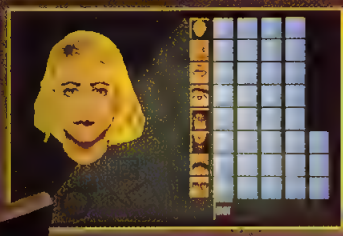
As a member of C.O.B.R.A., an underground resistance movement, you must promote discontent and revolution among the empire's populace through high-risk undercover operations that push your resourcefulness and judgement to the limit.

Can you spark a tiny flame of freedom into a wildfire of revolution?

- Three different modes of play: Training, Firefight and Campaign.
- Sophisticated character generation lets you choose your character's appearance, as well as psychological and physical characteristics. Over 4000 distinctive characters to interact with.
- Over a quarter million square miles of accurately-mapped 3-D terrain, drawn with light-sourced fractal graphics.
- Mission options include rescuing political leaders, destroying shipping convoys, sabotaging power stations, ambushing Imperial troops and smuggling arms to the resistance.







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IBM screens shown. Actual screens may vary.

THE PERFECT GENERAL

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

This game from newcomer QQP is one of the few pure war games that's been published in the past year, and it's one of the best to come along for the PC since *Empire*'s release in 1987. Based on a paper game system that was perfected over 12 years of intense tournament play, *The Perfect General* has an air of passion about it that you sometimes get when hobbyists unleash their dreams on the public — a trait increasingly rare and treasurable in today's high-stakes, corporate-product PC environment.

The Perfect General consists of two-player (or one-player/computer) battles fought with generic late-20th-century armaments on abstract terrain. The game concentrates solely on land-based operations, with no aircraft or amphibious units allowed. (For those more interested in naval warfare, check out QQP's *The Lost Admiral*, covered in last issue's "Desktop General" column.)

Not only is this game great fun, but it also looks terrific.

Players are given a pool of purchasing points to "buy" units — heavy tanks cost a lot, armored cars cost only a few, etc. There are many complex trade-offs between mobility, firepower, and point cost, so determining the ideal mix of units for a given scenario is one of the game's basic challenges.

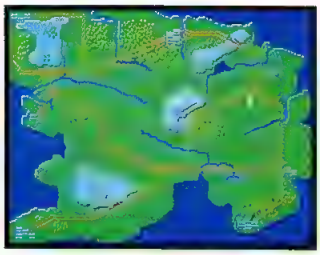
Battles are fought on a variety of terrain configurations laid over a basic hex grid that the computer uses to determine ranges and movement capabilities (you can toggle the grid on or off). The player can tailor each battle to fit his mood by tweaking such variables as "full kill/partial kill" and "random hit/always hit."

Play consists of a set number of turns during which each side moves and fires. Though it seems that the side which fires first would be at an advantage, options for "return fire" and "passing fire" at moving enemy targets go a long way toward duplicating the action of a "real-time" battle.

Victory points are awarded for possession of strategic objectives (in some scenarios, possession of certain towns provides reinforcement points). Merely slaughtering your opponent's units doesn't guarantee victory, since he could sneak a few armored cars through your lines and occupy the right objectives. This design philosophy splendidly balances the importance of firepower and *maneuver*, an element of good generalship sometimes slighted in PC war games.

The battles are truly exciting — *The Perfect General*, in fact, provides plenty of bang for the buck. The animated tanks move with squealing treads and roaring cannon, and thunderous artillery barrages come complete with smoking wreckage and fields of craters.

There are a few quirks in game play that you'll need to get used to. For example, infantry units are extremely cheap,



Terrain maps are varied and full of interesting features.

but they seem useful only to occupy objectives; in combat, they're virtually impotent. No provision is made for fortifications, which seems odd. And the rules governing minefields are downright eccentric: you can't place mines on bridges (ideal places for mines), and the enemy always "sees" minefields planted on roads and in villages. Mines can be marginally useful to block narrow defiles, but not once in any games we played did enemy units actually suffer damage from a mine — they simply moved around the minefields, suffering only a slight inconvenience.

Whenever fun and realism conflict in the game, *The Perfect General* comes down on the side of fun...but never excessively so. Graphics are crisp and attractive, and the interface is everything it should be for such a game. The only thing missing is a scenario-building program, and QQP tells us there's one coming. All in all, this is one terrific war game.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; supports Ad Lib and Sound Blaster sound cards; supports mouse or joystick; supports modem play.

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SO REAL YOU CAN SMELL THE SMOKE

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Capt. Sean Bannon snapped his head to the left. There was only one place where the Russians could be, and that was on the hill 2200 metres away. All the training, planning and preparations were over. Team Yankee was about to learn if the team's seventy nine men and twenty five million dollars worth of equipment could do what they were supposed to do.

Team Yankee is designed to test your leadership and tactical skills to the limit. You can display in either **"quadrant mode"** where all four platoons may be controlled at once

or

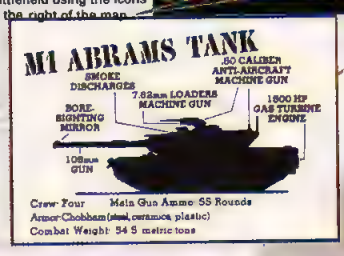
Full-screen Mode where the display homes in on just one platoon.

You have the flexibility to display either an overhead map view of the surrounding area, a simulated 3D view of the battlefield, or a status screen showing the performance of all vehicles in a platoon. Irrespective of which screen mode you choose during battle, there is a constant column of information to the right of the screen.

To the right of the compasses are five icons which represent the various types of **weaponry** available to the unit.

MACHINE GUN - which is always available to the player and has an 'infinite' number of rounds.
SMOKE - a smoke grenade which allows enemy vision to be obscured.
HEAT - a high explosive anti-tank round
SABOT - an armor-piercing tungsten shell
TOW - a high-range anti-tank missile

The major capability on the quadrant map screen is to alter the movement and formation of any platoon. The whole of the map may be viewed at once, or you may zoom into any portion of the battlefield using the icons to the right of the map.



Team Yankee is the definitive action simulation of modern tank warfare. Watch scenarios unfold on 3D battlefields with high definition graphics and keep track of the four tank platoons you control using the unique 4 quadrant display. Defend Hill 214 from Yuri Potecknov's crack tank platoons, attack Objective Link through sniper fire from forests, protect the Langen Gap from an entire Soviet tank battalion at night!

Five major scenarios based on the battles featured in the New York Times No. 1 best seller Team Yankee.

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Engine smoke This will prove very useful in confusing your enemy if you find yourself in a tight corner.

Rotation icon and compass display.

Infra red (or thermal) **imaging** This feature is very useful for identifying vehicles camouflaged on the edge of forests Contary to popular belief the thermal image is green and not red

Zoom. When this icon is accessed the central portion of the screen is magnified by a factor of 10.

Laser range finder. The range finder will lock on to a reflective target if the firing cursor is placed directly over the object.

Wide formation icon. This increases the spacing between vehicles in your platoon to 100 metres.

Narrow formation icon. This reduces the inter-vehicle spacing in your platoon to 50 metres.

Vee. a vee formation.

Echelon left - places your vehicles on a right to left diagonal relative to your direction.

Wedge - places your vehicles in a wedge formation

Scroll icon: The four arrows underneath the ETA display allow you to scroll your map in any of the four directions.

Dead Stop icon. This red icon, causes your platoon to come to a dead halt when clicked.

In line - places your vehicles in a line abreast relative to your direction.

Column - places your vehicles in a line ahead relative to your direction.

Echelon right - places your vehicles on a left to right diagonal relative to your direction.

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READER RABBIT 2

LANCE ELKO

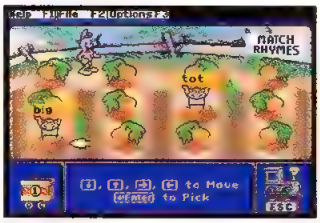
If you have youngsters at home, you'd do well to acquaint yourself with **The Learning Company**. In recent years, this educational software publisher has produced some of the finest learning games around. As developers and designers, they do their homework — in other words, they know what kids like. All of their titles are highly playable and very user-friendly, and feature state-of-the-art graphics.

One of The Learning Company's newest titles, *Reader Rabbit 2*, is no exception. Like the award-winning *Reader Rabbit*, which debuted in PC format more than five years ago (an upgraded version has recently been released), this sequel focuses on development of reading skills. *Reader Rabbit 2* is targeted for ages 5-8, while the original *Rabbit* is designed for the 3-6 age group.

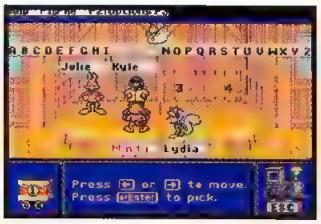
Word Mine

Reader Rabbit 2 consists of four games, each with varying degrees of difficulty (the program automatically increases in difficulty for successful players). The program starts with host Reader Rabbit inviting the player on a train trip through the town of Wordville. To get a ticket, the player types in his or her name, which is used to keep track of individual player scores.

The first stop on the trip, Word Mine, is a game that builds skills in forming compound words and consonant blends. Here, the child is given a word, and must link it to one of six other words to form a compound word. For example, from a selection of *straw*, *water*, *butter*, *base*, *air*, and *jelly*, the player must pick the right word to link with *fly*.



Match Patch



Alphabet Dance

In Vowel Pond, the second stop, the child is shown a long or short vowel and is asked to catch fish labeled with words containing the matching vowel sound. For example, if the vowel object is a short *e*, the player should catch fish with names like *pet* or *wet*.

The next stop, Match Patch, is a variation on the old "Concentration" TV game show. The focus here, depending on the difficulty level, is to teach recognition of rhymes, homonyms, or word opposites. 12 carrots are shown in a field; when a carrot is pulled up, a word is revealed. The child "harvests" carrots by matching two words at a time until all the carrots are gone.

The final stop, Alphabet Dance, teaches early dictionary skills. Here, the player must place four characters, each with name cards, in alphabetical order. If the characters are lined up correctly, they perform a choreographed dance to the accompaniment of some lively music.

Vowel Pond

Reader Rabbit 2's graphics, animation, sound, and music are splendidly charming. Great attention has been given to detail throughout, and that's something kids notice. The game's menu-based interface, similar to that used in most all Learning Company titles, is intuitive and easy to use. Three menu bars — labeled Help, File, and Options — occupy the top of the screen throughout play. Point to any of these and you'll get pull-down menus that provide access to any information you could possibly want about the game.

The manual is comprehensive and clearly written, and includes an Educational Focus chapter that explains to adults the intent of each section of the game.

In all facets, *Reader Rabbit 2* is a solid choice for those with young readers at home or in the classroom.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for Tandy 1000 series machines); VGA (256-color), PS/2 MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, and Roland sound boards; supports mouse.

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RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

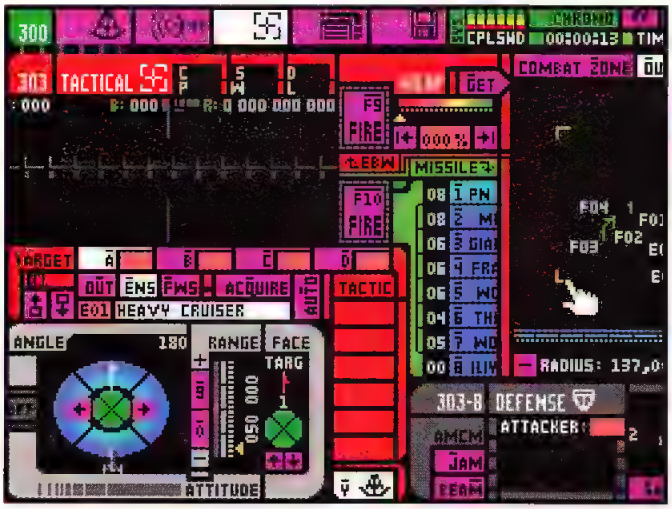
WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Many players will love the mission-builder program, used to customize starships and their captains, alien adversaries, and even the nature of new star systems.

This smart, complex, and unconventional program won't appeal to everyone — mastering it requires a vast amount of time and patience — but those who like it will probably become passionate devotees.

Based loosely on Omnitrend's popular Universe games, *Rules of Engagement* from **Mindcraft** is a real-time strategic and tactical game of space combat in which you assume the role of fleet commander for the Federated Worlds.

The most interesting concept embodied in the game is the IGS (Interlocking Game System) feature. This allows you to take two or more self-contained IGS-equipped games, such as last year's *Breach 2*, and "lock" them within one another to form a sort of megagame, one which can be expanded with future modules up to the limits of your hard disk storage space.



Though intimidating at first glance, the interface is logical and elegant; a helpful tutorial makes the basics very clear.

For example, in a megagame you can play now, *Rules of Engagement* would be designated the "controlling module" — i.e., the starting point for your characters and spaceships — and when a game situation calls for specialized action, *Rules* would automatically segue into *Breach 2*, then back into *Rules*.

In *Rules of Engagement*, you exercise direct control only over your own character and the ship under your command. All other actions must be assigned to subordinate commanders, each of whom has a dossier full of personal quirks and talents.

All navigational, tactical, and communications systems of the starship are controlled through a strikingly original interface, based on the assumption that starships would most likely be controlled by touch-sensitive panels rather than conventional keyboards, buttons, and switches. Control panels and "situation fields" are laid out on screen after screen of functions, data, commands, and readouts, all arranged to present a slick, truly futuristic appearance. Color coding is used to connect related areas of the screen and to indicate active and inactive functions. Action buttons, for instance, are magenta, and selection buttons are bright blue.

In most PC games, the interface is the key that unlocks game play; in *Rules of Engagement*, to a great extent, the interface *is* the game.

Sound complicated? Well...it is and it isn't. The manual lays everything out clearly and logically in plain, if necessarily lengthy, English, and the initially daunting on-screen displays are quite beautiful in the same sort of abstract way that a Bach tocatta is beautiful.

The game includes a broad range of missions, many involving action-packed *Breach 2* combat. We suspect, though, that most players will gravitate, as soon as their expertise permits, to the mission- builder utility. This allows you to design your own officer corps, alien species, types of spaceships, and even star systems.

The complicated interface will probably repel as many players as it attracts. Some players, while admiring the Swiss-watch precision and elegance of this interface, may find that after they've gone through the trouble to master it, the entertainment payoff (except in the scenarios where the *Breach 2* module kicks in) is something of a fizzle. Just as many others, however, will find that mastering the interface *is* the entertainment here.

Rules of Engagement is not everyone's cup of tea, but for some it could become a way of life...maybe even a religion.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; hard drive required; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, and Roland sound boards; supports mouse.

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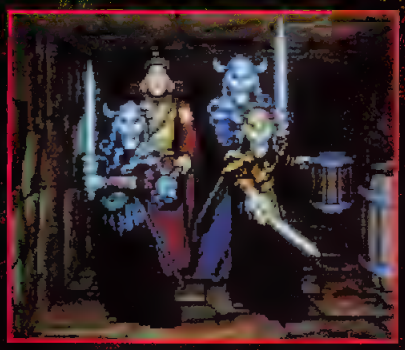

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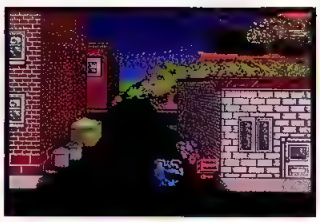
SUPER MUNCHERS

LESLIE EISER

Adults can't enjoy playing games designed for eight-year-olds, right? Wrong! *Super Munchers*, a new trivia game from **MECC**, has enough variety to keep parents, teenagers, and third-graders entertained. It's a tough trick to pull off, but the company with one of the oldest names in educational software has managed it.

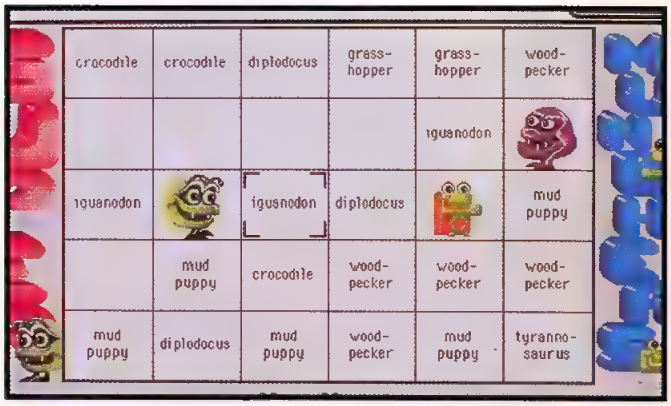
As in most good games, the task in *Super Munchers* is simple. You move a little green character called a Muncher around the game board, munching answers (like *Denver*) that fit a stated rule (like *U.S. city*). When you've munched all the words that fit, you've completed the level.

To keep you on your toes, colorful monsters called Troggles appear periodically. These tricky friends of the evil Dr. Frankentroggle move around the board changing answers and eating unwary munchers. As your score increases, the number, speed, and intelligence of the Troggles grows proportionally. Hardest to avoid are the fiendish Smarties (*Trogglus smarticus*), who hunt you down if you take too long deciding on an answer.



Troggles are definitely tricky critters. Watch Bashful's movements carefully if you want to recover the key to the lab of Dr. Frankentroggle.

After 20 correct munches in a row, a "transformation cell" appears onscreen. Enter it, and your Muncher becomes a Super Muncher (*Munchicus magnificus*), complete with cape and Super Vision. Once transformed, you no longer need fear the occasional Troggles. Just run them down and destroy them with a very satisfying POW! Unfortunately, your super powers are of limited duration, and all too soon you're back to being a regular muncher. After clearing three game boards by finding all the correct answers, you're rewarded with an animated interlude. This game within the game is a big part of the fun of *Super Munchers*. From trying to remember where the secret password was hidden to navigating the cliff in front of Dr. Frankentroggle's castle, the five cartoony interludes offer youngsters a reward for playing the game and an incentive to complete additional levels.



Super Munchers wear capes, eat Troggles for breakfast, and fly around the game board in search of the right answers.

What makes *Super Munchers* such a great game for families is the variety that it offers. There are 3,000 different words, 130 categories, and three levels of play here. Each skill level varies not only the rules that will be used (for example, the easiest level in Geography uses continents or U.S. cities, while the higher levels turn to the eastern hemisphere or countries whose primary language is Spanish), but also the kind of vocabulary required. Beginners must know that dogs, elephants, and whales are mammals, and experts must recognize that kangaroos, opossums, and Tasmanian devils are marsupials.

To customize the program to the needs of different players, use either the quick-set options (predetermined settings organized roughly by grade level -- 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, high school, and ultimate) or go into the highly detailed customizing routines to pick and choose from 305 rules in 6 game headings (Animals, Famous Americans, Food and Health, Geography, Music, and Odds 'n' Ends). A password feature lets you protect your choices from unauthorized manipulation.

Super Munchers succeeds in every aspect, combining solid educational content with enough arcade trappings to keep today's videogame generation entertained. And the customizing options allow players of widely varying abilities to select the kind of game that suits them best.

But don't be surprised if you find you can't maintain a position on the top of each list — I've got my kids beat when it comes to Geography, but they wipe me off the scoreboard in Music and Animals.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, or CGA graphics; supports Ad Lib sound boards.

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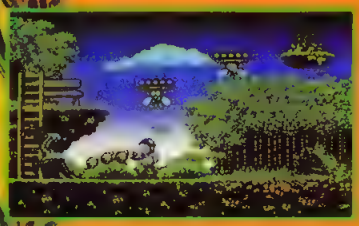

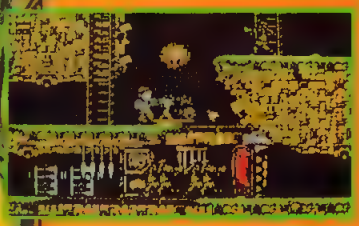

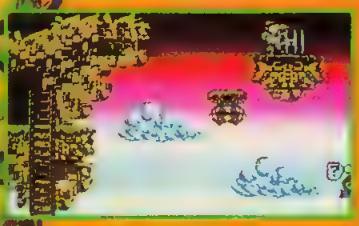

Screen shots shown are from the Amiga version of the game.

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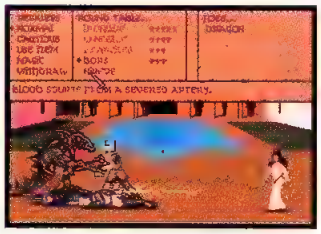
VENGEANCE OF EXCALIBUR

JEFF LUNDRIGAN

In last year's *Spirit of Excalibur*, King Arthur's successor, Constantine, sent his knights on a quest across England to find the means of defeating the evil sorceress Morgan Le Fay. Although eventually vanquished, Morgan managed to summon the demon lord Shadowmaster. Now the Shadowmaster has stolen the Arthurian treasures, including Excalibur and even the Holy Grail itself. Constantine has been turned to stone, the court sorceress Nineve has been taken prisoner, the land withers — what can be done?

In *Vengeance of Excalibur*, **Virgin Games**' second adaptation of the Arthurian legend, the outlook for Camelot is none too promising. Only a few of the bravest knights of the Round Table are willing to pursue the Shadowmaster to Spain, most of which is ruled by the Muslim Caliph. With Moors to the south, feuding Christian kings to the north, and bandit armies roaming everywhere in between, Spain is indeed one of the most dangerous places in the world.



In the finest Arthurian tradition, you get a chance to slay a dragon or two.

Anyone familiar with *Spirit of Excalibur* will feel right at home here, since *Vengeance* has essentially the same menu-driven, icon-based interface. You move your party of knights by clicking on a destination on a large tactical map, from which you can also access a zoom view for exploring particular scenes. A series of nested commands is used for character interaction — effective when purchasing items or hiring troops, but difficult to use quickly in combat.

But don't think this sequel retains all the characteristics of the first game. *Spirit of Excalibur* lacked a clear direction, leaving it up to the player to sort things out for himself with few, if any, clues about where to begin. *Vengeance of Excalibur* takes almost the opposite tack. The game is so linear, in fact, that an almost unbroken line of clues stretches from the start of the game to the end.

Keep a sharp lookout for the Gypsy camp. They provide vital information during each of the game's seven episodes.

For instance, at a certain point in the game you'll have to travel to the city of Barcelona to find an important item. The catch is that Barcelona is currently occupied by Moors, and only an army can gain entry. Well, it just so happens that an army is camped outside the town where you learn this information. Once you investigate, you find that they're refugees from Barcelona, just waiting for an excuse to go back and recapture the place. How convenient can you get?

So most of the game's challenge lies not in figuring out what needs to be done, but in surviving the ensuing ordeal. The many dungeons and mazes are surprisingly lethal, and it takes considerable foresight to make it out alive. Simply having enough supplies on hand to heal everyone's wounds between fights is not always enough to prevail. Luckily, the personal combat scenes are quite exciting to watch, despite the awkward battle menus.

As with *Spirit of Excalibur*, the most impressive feature by far is the graphic presentation. While not quite the visual feast of its predecessor, *Vengeance of Excalibur* is still extremely pretty. The graphics are colorful, filled with lots of period atmosphere and touches of humor. One of the delightful aspects of the game is the assortment of odd characters you meet (unfortunately, you see less of them as the game progresses).

Vengeance of Excalibur is certainly large and detailed, and remarkably handsome. While it may not be the most challenging experience you've ever had, it's undoubtedly an enjoyable game.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; hard drive recommended; VGA, MCGA, EGA, or Tandy graphics; supports Roland, Ad-Lib, Covox, and Tandy 3-Voice sound boards; supports mouse (highly recommended).

Screen shots from Amiga version.

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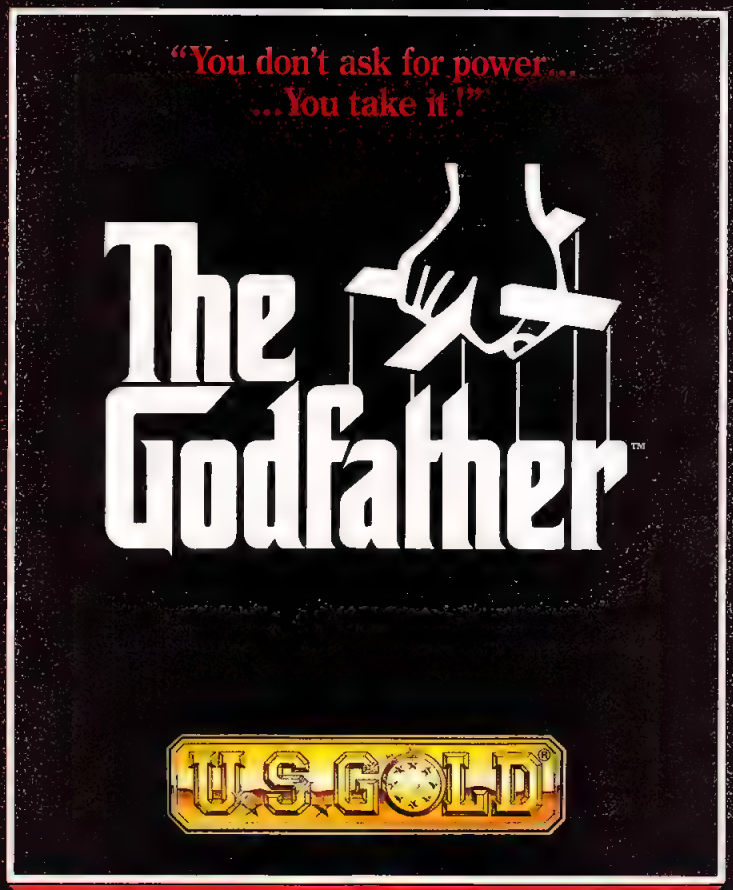

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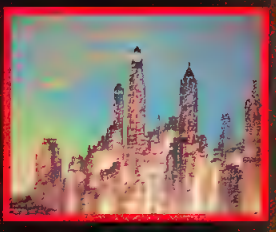

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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications

To order see your local retailer or call 1-800-245-7744

MUSICAL KEYBOARD

Introduced last year for use with Nintendo game machines, the Miracle Piano Teaching System from **The Software Toolworks** is now available for PC users. The system includes software, a keyboard with built-in stereo speakers, a cable connection, AC adapter, and earphones. The keyboard features 49 full-sized, velocity-sensitive keys, a sustain pedal, and full MIDI compatibility. The system is capable of producing more than 100 digital sounds.

The Miracle System software is designed to allow students of any skill level to progress through more than 1000 lessons at their own pace. A built-in library of 100-plus songs is included, featuring classical, rock, jazz, pop, and country styles.

Suggested retail price for the Miracle System is $479.95.

SPACE SIMULATION FROM INTERPLAY

Former astronaut Buzz Aldrin has signed a contract with **Interplay** to help produce a space simulation slated for release in the spring of 1992. *Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space* will be based on the board game LIFTOFF!, designed by Fritz Bonner. Bonner will join with Aldrin in helping to produce the simulation.

In *Race into Space*, the U.S., Russia, and several European countries compete to be the first country to launch a manned spacecraft. The player selects a country and manages its fledgling space program, recruiting and training a team of astronauts from 140 different candidates. After evaluation of secret intelligence data, the player must determine which programs should be developed first.

The simulation, which incorporates actual digitized space footage, offers players more than 50 space missions, and includes more than 70 animated launch, reentry, and recovery sequences. *Race into Space* can be played against a human or computer-controlled opponent, and also features modem-play capabilities.

GUIDEBOOK FOR HARPOON PLAYERS

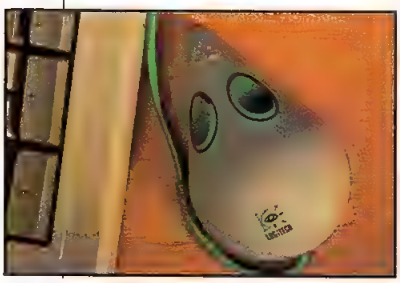
Prima Publishing has released *The Harpoon Battlebook: The Official Strategies & Tactics Guide*, a comprehensive source book for players of *Harpoon*, Three Sixty's award-winning game of naval warfare strategy.

The Harpoon Battlebook includes a brief history of the game system and a discussion of how the game was created; introductory and advanced tactics; a scenario-editor design guide featuring three scenarios from Michael Palmer's novel, *Blue Water Navy*; numerous tables of previously undisclosed platform, sensor, and weapon system data used by the program; and individual BattleSet BattleMaps, featuring previously undisclosed characteristics and types of land-based sensors and weapon systems for 112 land bases. For more information, contact Prima Publishing, P.O. Box 1260, Rocklin, CA 95677-1260.

MOUSE FOR KIDS

Logitech recently introduced the Kidz Mouse, a product ergonomically designed for the hands of young children. The mouse is bundled with software, a user's guide, a 9- to 25-pin adaptor, and the *Dinosaur Discovery Kit*, an educational program developed by First Byte.

Suggested retail price for the mouse package is $79.00, although it should be available at a street price of about $49.



NEW PC SOUND STANDARD COMING

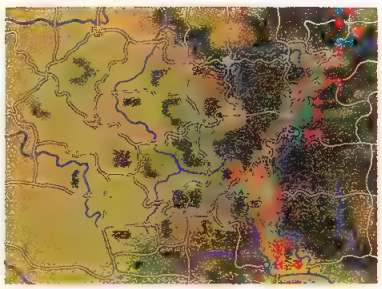
In a move that will significantly upgrade standards for built-in PC sound, **Disney Software** has licensed its Sound Source technology to **Phoenix Technologies**. Phoenix, which designs, develops, and markets systems software products for PCs, has a customer base of more than 250 PC desktop and laptop hardware manufacturers.

According to Disney Software vice-president and general manager Shelley Miles, this licensing agreement will provide a low-cost solution for sound and speech in PCs, and will redefine "the minimum acceptable audio quality for standard PC platforms."

"Patton Strikes Back... could become a classic, like Crawford's groundbreaking Eastern Front."
GAME PLAYERS

BEAT ADOLF AT HIS OWN GAME

Patton Strikes Back: The Battle of the Bulge is the compelling new computer game that gives you a chance to foil the plans of der Führer himself.



See your strategy unfold on a stunning battle-map that shows divisions, supply lines and more.

The daring German blitzkrieg was Hitler's brainchild. And it almost succeeded. But "Old Blood & Guts" Patton was there to mount his own counterattack.

Pit your strategic skills against Hitler's top generals. Or if that seems too easy, switch sides and see if *you* can stop Patton.

As you play, you'll be bombarded by newsreels of digitized WWII film clips...battlefield photos and bulletins...and dozens of fascinating war stories.

Patton Strikes Back captures the chaos and confusion of one of history's most bitterly fought—and most decisive—battles.

Yet, thanks to the elegantly simple command system, even a rookie can quickly take charge. To issue orders, you merely point, click and drag.

Like chess, the basic moves and strategies are easy to learn. But also like chess, it can take a lifetime to master the nuances.

Baffled? Call on a battle-tested general for advice.

Chris Crawford, America's premier game designer, has created a new kind of wargame. Historically credible, but not incredibly complex. Endlessly exciting—but never mindless.

In a word, it's a kick.

Patton Strikes Back runs on MS-DOS and Mac. See it at your dealer for $59.95 (suggested retail).

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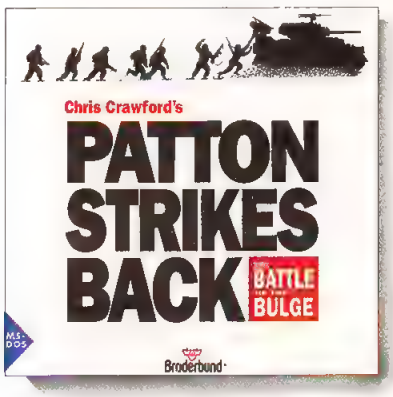

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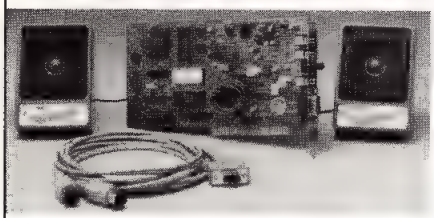

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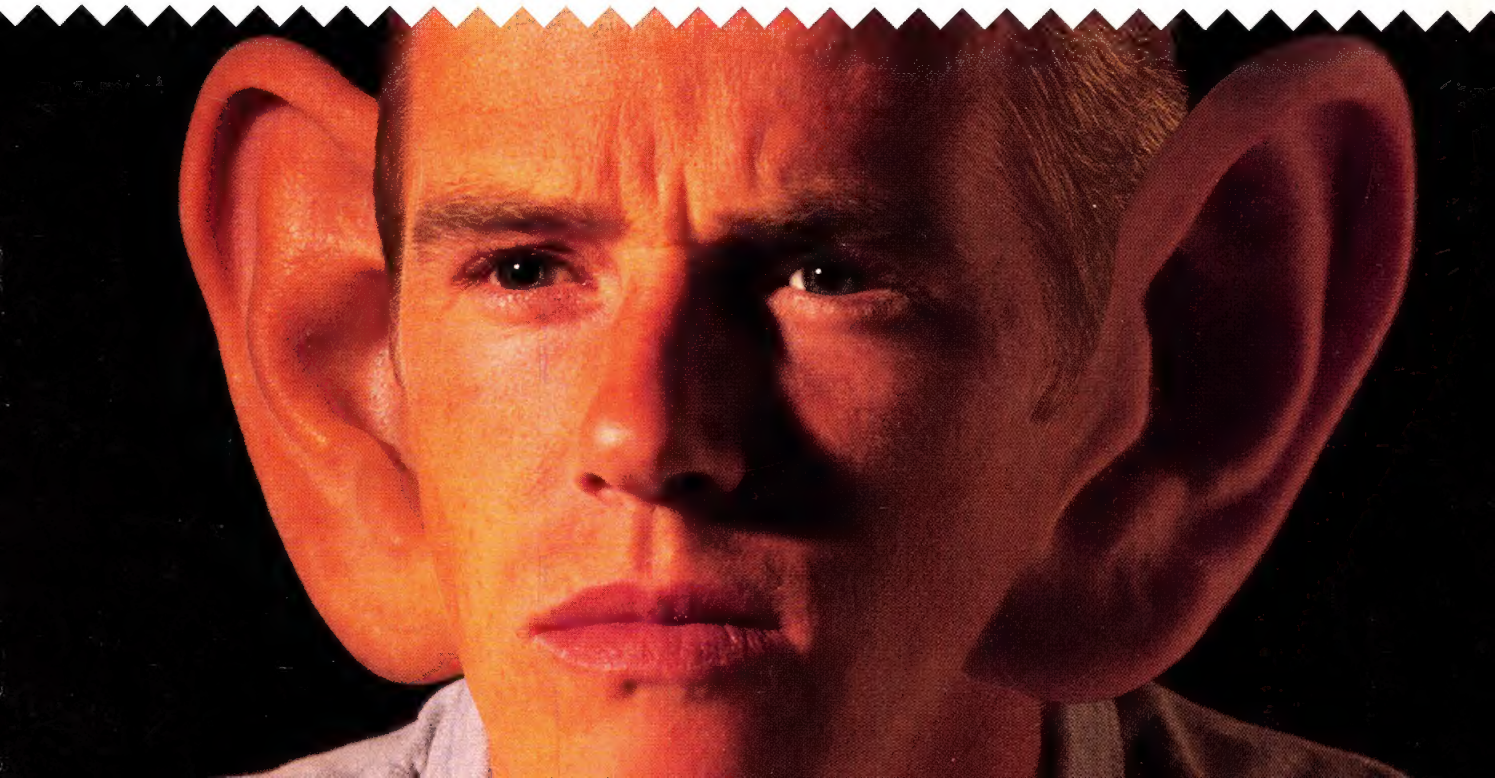

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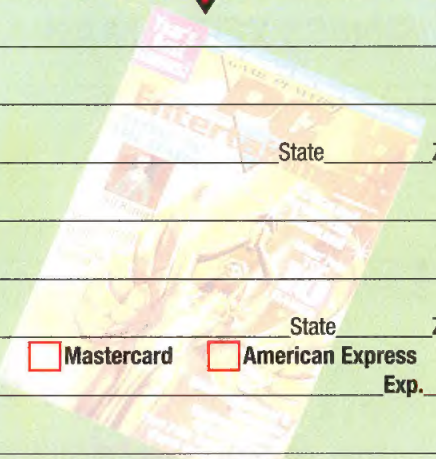

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